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Rethinking Metaphorical Love:

Embodiment, Sexuality, and Sufi Thought in Jāmī's *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Islamic Studies

by

Azeem Aziz Malik

2026

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Rethinking Metaphorical Love:

Embodiment, Sexuality, and Sufi Thought in Jāmī's *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*

by

Azeem Aziz Malik

Doctor of Philosophy in Islamic Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2026

Professor Michael Cooperson, Co-Chair

Professor Christine van Ruymbeke, Co-Chair

This dissertation argues against the dominant scholarly tradition of interpreting *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*—a romantic *maṯnavī* by the Timurid-era polymath, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 1492 CE)—that retells the Quranic version of the story of Yūsuf (Joseph in the Hebrew Bible) and Zulaykhā (Potiphar's wife). According to the traditional interpretive approach, Zulaykhā is a stand-in for the Sufi concept of the carnal soul (*nafs*), and she must transcend, sublimate, and atone for her unlawful lust for Yūsuf in order to love God with a purified heart. By reading the poem alongside Jāmī's philosophical commentaries and his previously overlooked intertexts—

such as ʿIrāqī's (d. 1289 CE) *Lamaʿāt,* Niẓāmī's (d. 1209) *Haft paykar*, and Ibn ʿArabī's (d. 1240) *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*—I argue that the poem actually articulates a different theory of love, according to which embodied, sexual, and romantic human love is not merely a stepping-stone to divine love but is instead already inherently divine.

The poem's theory of love is rooted in the cosmological and metaphysical views that Jāmī adopts from his forebears in the "School" of Ibn ʿArabī, who argue that the entire perceptible world is nothing other than God's self-manifestation. Jāmī takes the further step of equating God's essence with beauty, and for him this means that all human love originates from, and is always directed toward, God. I show how key episodes in the poem's narrative—such as Zulaykhā's seduction attempts, her destruction of her idol, Yūsuf and Zulaykhā's marriage, and Zulaykhā's death—illustrate Jāmī's theory, which ultimately valorizes embodied human love and desire. By offering a novel reading of Jāmī's poem, this dissertation invites further reconsideration of Jāmī's role as both canonizer of the Persian literary tradition and popularizer of Ibn ʿArabī's theoretical Sufism.

The dissertation of Azeem Aziz Malik is approved.

Allison Kanner-Botan

Luke Benson Yarbrough

Michael David Cooperson, Committee Co-Chair

Christine van Ruymbeke, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2026

DEDICATION

To my maternal grandmother

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Introduction: The Most Beautiful of Stories

0.1. Background and Overview

Perhaps the most famous of the literary works of the Timurid-era polymath ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (1414–1492 CE) is *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*, a *maṯnavī*—or long poem consisting of successive rhyming *bayt*s, or distichs—numbering over 4000 lines.[1] It was composed in 1483 CE for Sultan Ḥusayn Bāyqarā (r. 1470–1506 CE), the Timurid ruler whose capital at the time was the city of Herat, which is located in what is now Afghanistan.[2] The poem tells the story of the love between the Prophet Yūsuf (Joseph in the biblical tradition) and the wife of the "ʿAzīz" of Egypt (Potiphar in the Bible), who had acquired Yūsuf as a slave. The story is narrated in *sūra* (chapter) 12 ("Sūrat Yūsuf") of the Qurʾān, which the Qurʾān itself calls "the best [or most beautiful] of stories" ("*aḥsan al-qiṣaṣ*," Qurʾān 12:3). An expansion of the Quranic story, Jāmī's *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā* is one of the seven *maṯnavī*s that comprise Jāmī's heptad, *Haft awrang* ("The Seven Thrones," or "The Constellation of Ursa Major"), which he conceived as a response to Niẓāmī's (d. 1209 CE) *Khamsih* ("Quintet"). *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā* has traditionally been understood as a response specifically to Niẓāmī's *Khusraw va Shīrīn,* one of the five *maṯnavī*s that comprise his *Khamsih*.[3] This poem, like much of Jāmī's literary output, was not only a self-conscious

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[1] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Maṯnavī-i haft awrang*, ed. Aʿlā Khān Afṣaḥzād, Jābilqā Dād ʿAlīshāh, Aṣghar Jānfidā, Ṭāhir Aḥrārī, and Ḥusayn Aḥmad Tarbīyat (Daftar-i Nashr-i Mīrāṯ-i Maktūb, 1378/1999), 2:17–209. Hereafter, this edition of *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā* will be referred to as *YZ*, with the volume number (2) omitted when page numbers are provided.

[2] On Ḥusayn Bāyqarā, see Hans R. Roemer, "Ḥosayn Bāyqarā," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online* (Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, 1996–), published December 15, 2004; last modified March 23, 2012, https://iranicaonline.org/articles/hosayn-bayqara.

[3] Paola Orsatti, "Khosrow and Shirin and the Poems of Love and Adventure," in *Persian Narrative Poetry in the Classical Era, 800–1500: Romantic and Didactic Genres*, ed. Mohsen Ashtiany and Ehsan Yarshater (I.B. Tauris, 2023), 236. See also Paul Losensky, "Jāmi i. Life and Works," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online* (Encyclopaedia

reception and reformulation of the Persian literary and intellectual canon that preceded him, as indicated by its relationship to Niẓāmī's work. Rather, *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā* was also part of a common literary culture that spanned the Eurasian Persographic world after 1500 CE, a cultural zone often referred to scholars as the "Persianate."[4] The poem's spread across this zone can be seen in its translations and adaptations into languages as diverse as Bengali, Sanskrit, Pashto, and Georgian, among others, which have been the subjects of numerous recent studies.[5]

Despite recent scholarly attention on the reception of Jāmī's work in general and *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā* in particular, scholarship on the poem itself is lacking. For example, no European-language monograph or dissertation on *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā* has yet been produced.[6] Additionally,

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Iranica Foundation, 1996–), published December 15, 2008; last modified April 10, 2012, https://iranicaonline.org/articles/jami-i.

[4] Thibaut d'Hubert and Alexandre Papas, introduction to *Jāmī in Regional Contexts: The Reception of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī's Works in the Islamicate World, ca. 9th/15th-14th/20th Century*, ed. d'Hubert and Papas (Brill, 2018), 14. For a definition of "Persographic" as referring to a cultural zone spanning Eurasia in the medieval and early modern periods, in which written Persian was a contact language that interacted with, and shaped, local and regional languages, cultures, and writing practices, see Nile Green, "Introduction: The Frontiers of the Persianate World (ca. 800–1900)," in *The Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca*, ed. Green (University of California Press, 2019), 1–71.

[5] Thibaut d'Hubert, "Foundational *Maḥabbat-nāmas*: Jāmī's *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā* in Bengal (ca. 16th–19th AD)," in *Jāmī in Regional Contexts*, 649–691; Ayesha A. Irani, "Love's New Pavilions: Śāhā Mohāmmad Chagīr's Retelling of *Yūsuf va Zulaykhā* in Early Modern Bengal," in *Jāmī in Regional Contexts*, 692–751; Luther Obrock, "Śrīvara's *Kathākautuka*: Cosmology, Translation, and the Life of a Text in Sultanate Kashmir," in *Jāmī in Regional Contexts*, 752–776; C. Ryan Perkins, "A Bounty of Gems: *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā* in Pashto," in *Jāmī in Regional Contexts*, 777–797; Rebecca Gould, "Sweetening the Heavy Georgian Tongue: Jāmī in the Georgian-Persianate World," in *Jāmī in Regional Contexts*, 798–828. For a study of Ottoman Turkish versions of the story, which may not have been directly inspired by, or responding to, Jāmī's version, see Züleyha Çolak, "Romancing the Female Role in Ottoman Joseph and Zulaykha *Meşnevī*s: Taşlıcalı Yahyā's *Yūsuf u Zelīhā*" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2010), ProQuest (Order No. 3409807).

[6] There is, however, a recent MA thesis. Leila El-Murr, "Seeing God: The Use of Theories of Vision in Jāmī's «Yūsuf va Zulaykhā»," (MA thesis, McGill University, 2014), https://doi.org/10.82308/53959.

no complete translation of the poem has been published in English in over a century.[7] Furthermore, most analyses of the poem to date have read it as a simple allegory of the human soul's path to God by means of human love. According to most scholarly readers of the poem, Zulaykhā's physical, embodied, human love for Yūsuf eventually leads her to, and is transcended by, love for (or at least devotion to) God.[8] The central intervention of this dissertation is to argue against such a reading. I argue that Zulaykhā, in Jāmī's poem, never transcends her (physical and embodied) love for Yūsuf, abandons it for, or sublimates it into, "union" with God, however such union is defined. I argue against reading her story as a spiritual journey or a process of enlightenment. Rather, her unwavering love for Yūsuf is treated by Jāmī as exemplary: she is the greatest of lovers, according to him, and has been all her life.[9] She is already aware of the divine nature and origin of Yūsuf's beauty, and her love for him already entails within itself her love for God. Her story is not one of radical transformation, but rather of steadfastness in the face of obstacles to the consummation of her love.

The character that actually undergoes a substantial transformation is Yūsuf, whose love for Zulaykhā, I show, is actively awakened by her initiative. I argue that the poem casts his love

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[7] Alexander Rogers, *The Book of Yusuf and Zuleikha*, by Jāmī (Cooper, 1910). Two other English translations, by Pendlebury and Griffith, both exclude large sections of the poem. Pendlebury claims that his "version represents approximately two-thirds of the original material," while Griffith's "covers a little more than three-fourths of the entire poem." David Pendlebury, trans., *Yusuf and Zulaikha, an Allegorical Romance* (London: Octagon Press, 1980), viii; Ralph T. H. Griffith, trans., *Yúsuf and Zulaykha: A Poem by Jámi* (Trübner & Co., 1882), viii.

[8] For versions of this argument see, in addition to El-Murr, Hamid Algar, *Jami* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 79–80; Orsatti, "Khosrow and Shirin," 236–246; Claudia Yaghoobi, "Zulaykhā's Displaced Desire in Jāmī's Yūsuf va Zulaykhā," *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies* 4, no. 2 (November 2019): 62–77, https://doi.org/10.2979/jims.4.2.04; Gayane Karen Merguerian and Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Zulaykha and Yusuf: Whose Best Story?," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, no. 4 (November 1995): 497–500, https://www.jstor.org/stable/164399.

[9] Jāmī, *YZ*, 39, lines 410–413.

for her as divine in nature and origin, just like her love for him. The fact that he must be transformed from beloved to lover in order for the two lovers to unite at the end suggests that the poem's vision of human love is not that it is inferior to love for the divine. Rather, love for a human being is an essential (experiential) component of divine love. This perspective of the poem, I argue, can be explained partially, but not fully, by reference to the thought of two of Jāmī's intellectual predecessors: Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240 CE) and Fakhr al-Dīn ʿIrāqī (d. 1289 CE).

In the remainder of this introduction, I provide a more detailed account of the current state of scholarship on *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā* to highlight the significance of this dissertation's intervention. I also offer an explanation of recent developments in scholarship on Jāmī's social and intellectual context and explain how this dissertation benefits from, and builds upon, these trends. I conclude this introduction with an outline of the dissertation chapters that follow and a summary of the poem's plot.

0.2. The Current State of Scholarship on Jāmī's *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*

As stated above, the dominant scholarly trend of analyzing *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā* has been to read it as an allegory. According to this reading, Zulaykhā is a stand-in for, or symbol of, the Sufi seeker, whose love for a human being is simply a stepping-stone to loving God. An influential presentation of this argument is found in Merguerian and Najmabadi's 1995 article, in which they survey different versions of the Yūsuf and Zulaykhā story. They write that in Jāmī's poem, "Yusuf stands for beauty and Zulaykha for love. Yusuf, through the concept of *jamāl*, thus stands in for the Divine; Zulaykha, through *ʿishq*, for a Sufi burning with desire for union with the Divine."[10] Their reading is evidently allegorical: the characters stand in for Sufi concepts,

[10] Merguerian and Najmabadi, "Whose Best Story?," 497.

and the course of the plot is based on a putatively Sufi theory of love's transformation from earthly to divine. The two authors view Zulaykhā's love for Yūsuf as merely a step on the ladder that leads to loving God. They write, "The object of Zulaykha's desire is transformed from an earthly man to union with the divine. Or rather, the desire for sexual union with Yusuf represents a preliminary manifestation of Zulaykha's total desire to reach God."[11] In their understanding, Zulaykhā's love for Yūsuf comes to be supplanted by her union with God. Love for God takes precedence over love for the human being; it is the goal of human love, which is a means to an end.

Other scholars have echoed Merguerian and Najmabadi's claims without always citing their work directly. For example, writing in German in the same year as Merguerian and Najmabadi, Annemarie Schimmel reached a similar conclusion. Summarizing texts from a range of Sufi authors, such as Hujwīrī (d. between 465/1073 and 469/1077) and Ḥamd Allāh Ḥamdī (d. 909/1503), and without singling out Jāmī's *maṯnavī* for special attention—though she considers his poem to be the "classic form" of the Yūsuf-Zulaykhā narrative[12]—Schimmel writes, "Thus the loving Zulaikha comes to personify the human soul, the *nafs*, which, as the Quran says in Sura Yusuf, 'incites to evil, *ammara biʾs-su*,' but which is purified through constant inner struggle and suffering and can finally return to her Lord as 'the soul at peace.'"[13] Schimmel thus points to Zulaykhā's suffering on account of being separated from Yūsuf while the latter is in

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[11] Merguerian and Najmabadi, "Whose Best Story?," 497.

[12] Annemarie Schimmel, *My Soul is a Woman: The Feminine in Islam*, trans. Susan H. Ray (Continuum, 1997), 62, originally published as *Meine Seele ist eine Frau: Das Weibliche im Islam* (Kösel Verlag GmbH & Co., 1995).

[13] Schimmel, *My Soul is a Woman*, 68.

prison as evidence of her inner transformation and her journey along a path from impure, human love, to human, divine love. This notion was echoed by Algar in his 2013 monograph on Jāmī, though he cites neither Schimmel nor Merguerian and Najmabadi. He writes, "The general sense of the allegory is plain: Zulaykha's tribulations represent the progress of the soul towards purity; her shattering of the idols corresponds to the final stage of that progress; her union with Joseph is the integration of lover with beloved; and their death indicates annihilation in the divine presence, a recapture of primordial oneness."[14] Algar, like his predecessors, reads Jāmī's poem as an allegory in which Zulaykhā represents the human soul as undergoing a process of transformation, specifically purification. He differs from them, however, in suggesting that Zulaykhā's ultimate union with God occurs not when she unites with Yūsuf, but when she dies. I disagree with this claim as well, and I argue instead that even when Zulaykhā dies, she does so out of a desire to unite with Yūsuf, and not with God.

Another important aspect of Algar's statement is his emphasis on Zulaykhā's act of idol-breaking as symbolizing her inner transformation and purification. Other analysts of the poem have also focused on this scene as representing Zulaykhā's spiritual or ethical transformation. El-Murr is one example.[15] Another is Claudia Yaghoobi, whose article on Zulaykhā's desire is the most thorough and detailed presentation of the scholarly trend against which I am arguing.[16] Like Schimmel, Algar, and El-Murr, Yaghoobi argues that Zulaykhā's suffering throughout the poem,

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[14] Algar, *Jami*, 80.

[15] El-Murr, "Seeing God," 36–40.

[16] Yaghoobi, "Zulaykhā's Displaced Desire."

which results from her failure to unite with Yūsuf and the pain she feels at their separation, is necessary for her to redeem the transgression of her lustful desire for Yūsuf.[17] Yaghoobi views Zulaykhā's destruction of the idol she worships, which precedes her eventual union with Yūsuf, as the culmination of this redemptive process. She writes, "The pain and suffering which Zulaykhā undergoes deconstruct and subvert her former consciousness. Since Zulaykhā is forced to break her idol (a metaphor for the *nafs*) before she can walk on the divine path, her path must be fraught with pain and suffering."[18] Her language echoes Schimmel's: Zulaykhā must purify or transform her carnal soul (*nafs*)—the impurity of which is evidenced by her transgressive, lustful desire for Yūsuf—in order to reach God. As Yaghoobi puts it, "Her initial desire for Yūsuf, which is sullied with lust, is transformed into a sacred desire. By transcending the boundaries of the body and earthly desire, Zulaykhā's misplaced desire finally finds its way home, to the sacred."[19] Scholars after Yaghoobi, namely Shaw and Hodgkin, have also understood the smashing of the idol as indicating her inner transformation and her traversal of the path of love to on to God. However, they differ from Yaghoobi by arguing that the idol is not a symbol of Zulaykhā's carnal soul, or *nafs*. For example, Shaw suggests that the idol is a symbol or stand-in for Yūsuf.[20] Her attachment to it, and by extension to Yūsuf, must be overcome or surpassed in order for her to reach God. Shaw writes, "[T]he beloved, like the idol, functions as a transitional

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[17] Yaghoobi, "Zulaykhā's Displaced Desire," 64, 69–70, 74.

[18] Yaghoobi, "Zulaykhā's Displaced Desire," 70.

[19] Yaghoobi, "Zulaykhā's Displaced Desire," 71.

[20] Wendy M. K. Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art?: Between Religion and Perception* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 234, 242.

object toward the true love of the ineffable divine."[21] Hodgkin also refers to Zulaykhā's idol as a "transitional object," writing that at the end of the poem, she is "united with Yusūf, having abandoned her first transitional object [i.e., the idol] in favor of the more authentic divine beauty of the human form, then, after achieving union, to the final object, God."[22] While Hodgkin, unlike Shaw, does not see the idol as directly standing in for Yūsuf—indeed, Shaw goes so far as to say Zulaykhā's love for Yūsuf constitutes "shirk: replacing God with the idol Yusuf"—he and Shaw both consider the idol and Yūsuf to be objects of Zulaykhā's attachment or devotion, which ultimately have to be given up for the sake of God.[23]

I depart from this body of scholarship by interpreting neither Zulaykhā's suffering nor her supposed abandonment of idolatry as indicative of an inner purification. As already stated, I disagree with the notion that Zulaykhā somehow gives up Yūsuf as her object of love, that her love for God supplants her love for Yūsuf. While I agree with Shaw that the idol can be read as a stand-in for Yūsuf, I argue that Jāmī portrays her idolatry as ultimately justified. In the poem, her devotion to her idol is ultimately directed at God, just as her love for Yūsuf already includes her love for God without needing to be transformed, redirected, or sublimated.

I make this case by highlighting Zulaykhā's consistency throughout the narrative instead of assuming that she undergoes a transformation. Both before and after her union with Yūsuf, she suffers on account of being separated from him (in the second instance, this separation

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[21] Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art?*, 248.

[22] Samuel Hodgkin, "*Ṣanam*: The idol in Persian vernacular theories of mimesis," *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 16 (2025): 717, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41280-025-00368-z.

[23] Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art?*, 242.

results from his death). Her destruction of her idol, I show, does not symbolize that she has finally arrived at the point where God is the sole object of her love and/or devotion. Yūsuf remains, throughout the entirety of the poem, the sole object of her love. The fact that Jāmī praises Zulaykhā for her love and her steadfast devotion to Yūsuf means, in my view, that she is never in the wrong. She does not have to undergo a process of redemption or purification, to use Yaghoobi and Schimmel's terms. She is already among those who know the true meaning of Yūsuf's beauty: its divine nature and origin.

In highlighting Jāmaī's use of repetition throughout the narrative, my approach resembles that of El-Murr. However, El-Murr sees this repetition as indicating change, contrast, or transformation. She writes,

> The narrative planning reveals that certain events in a lifetime occur twice and *gain a greater degree of reality in the second occurrence*. Zulaykhā marries twice, goes blind twice, Yūsuf goes underground and rises to fame twice, Zulaykhā's life is played out twice, once as herself and the second time through Bāzighah, and finally the castle with seven rooms is built twice, once for sin and the second time for piety. This double narrative suggests that the author is presenting idolatry as proleptic to experiences of God. *Thus the first experience is false but, upon correction, becomes real the second time.*[24]

For El-Murr, the plot events that prefigure, foreshadow, or mirror later events represent falsehoods that must be corrected. For example, the palace of seven chambers that Zulaykhā builds as part of her final scheme to seduce Yūsuf, which will be discussed in this dissertation, stands for "sin," while the house of worship that Yūsuf builds for Zulaykhā after they are married, which also includes seven chambers, stands for "piety." While I agree that a number of plot developments seem to occur twice, this repetition does not indicate truth triumphing over

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[24] El-Murr, "Seeing God," 4, emphasis added.

falsehood, or any similar sense of stark contrast. I suggest that, instead, repeated events serve either to highlight continuity, or they recontextualize past events. Zulaykhā's repeated suffering is an instance of continuity: both when Yūsuf is imprisoned, and after he dies, Zulaykhā suffers on account of her separation from her beloved (even though the two have been married in the interval between these two episodes of suffering), which symbolizes her continued steadfastness in love and her loyalty to her beloved. The construction of the two palaces is, in my view, an instance of recontextualization. As I show, Yūsuf does not see Zulaykhā's attempt to seduce him in the palace she has built as a sin that must be corrected through his later construction of a similar palace designed for worship. Instead, he describes her construction of the palace as a gift that he must repay, thus recontextualizing her seduction attempt as ultimately beneficial and justifiable.

Indeed, in arguing that Zulaykhā's climactic seduction attempt in the seven-chambered palace transforms Yūsuf into her lover and paves the way for their union at the story's end, I build on lines of argumentation suggested by Shaw. Though I disagree with Shaw's claim that Zulaykhā undergoes a major transformation, I align with her valorization of both Zulaykhā's passionate, sexual desire for Yūsuf and her idolatry. Shaw writes that Zulaykhā's "lust is neither sinful nor treacherous," thus countering arguments like those of El-Murr and Yaghoobi that characterize Zulaykhā's lust as a sin that must be corrected and atoned for.[25] Furthermore, though Shaw argues, unconvincingly in my view, that Zulaykhā's character does undergo a transformation, she sees her lustful desire and her idolatry not as obstacles to be overcome but as essential to her journey. She writes that "Jami unites fornication and idolatry not simply as

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[25] Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art?*, 238.

forbidden, but as a necessary to transcendence."[26] I argue, in a similar vein, that Jami portrays love for or between humans as essential to the experience of divine love. This is why Yūsuf's transformation into a lover due to Zulaykhā's seduction is, in my view, central to the story and its resolution. Shaw makes a similar argument, that Yūsuf benefits from adopting Zulaykhā's passion: "Thus Yusuf's adoption of Zuleikha's lust does not take him farther from prophecy, but closer."[27] In her view, Yūsuf's lust for Zulaykhā is not an obstacle that he must overcome, as Merguerian and Najmabadi suggest, but a crucial part of his development.[28]

In a recent article on a sixteenth-century Bengali retelling of Jāmī's story, Irani offers an interpretation of Jāmī's original text that, like Shaw's, celebrates Yūsuf's transformation into a lover at Zulaykhā's hands. At the end of Jāmī's narrative, Irani writes, "Zulaykhā's role at this juncture in the narrative can be read as her taking on the mantle of spiritual guide, with Yūsuf her new initiate on the path of passionate love—a path that she has long walked, and now moved beyond."[29] While I fundamentally disagree with Irani that Zulaykhā has moved beyond the path of passionate love at the story's end, I agree with her and Shaw that she does teach Yūsuf how to love, and that this instruction, akin to that of a "spiritual guide," is beneficial and ultimately essential to the plot. However, I align with Shaw instead of Irani in seeing Zulaykhā's transformative instruction of Yūsuf take place during Zulaykhā's final seduction attempt itself,

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[26] Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art?*, 241.

[27] Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art?*, 239.

[28] Merguerian and Najmabadi, "Whose Best Story?," 500.

[29] Irani, "Love's New Pavilions," 732.

and not after they are already married. Still, in viewing Yūsuf's transformation into a lover as positive and necessary, and in recognizing Zulaykhā's agency in bringing about his transformation, I agree with both Irani and Shaw and argue against Merguerian and Najmabadi, who write that Yūsuf's transformation into a lover turns Zulaykhā into merely an object and strips her of her agency.[30]

In arguing, in line with some preceding analyses, that Zulaykhā's desire is ultimately portrayed positively, while going beyond most prior arguments by arguing that Zulaykhā ultimately does not go on a journey of fundamental transformation, I base my interpretation on a particular reading of Ibn ʿArabī's cosmology and metaphysics. Scholars have, over at least the last few decades, recognized Jāmī's historical and cultural role as an exponent of Ibn ʿArabī's views and those of Ibn ʿArabī's students and followers. As I will show, Ibn ʿArabī's view that all of creation is God's self-manifestation means that all acts of love, devotion, and worship are ultimately directed at God. Shaw already gestures in this direction, recognizing how a certain reading of Ibn ʿArabī's thought can explain what she perceives as Jāmī's positive view of Zulaykhā's sexuality and idolatry. She takes Ibn ʿArabī's cosmology to mean that "every person and every act is also an embodiment of the divine," therefore Zulaykhā and Yūsuf's mutual lust for each other is ultimately directed at God.[31] Similarly, Zulaykhā's idolatry is also excused along these lines. Shaw writes, "Since the oneness of God is absolute, all acts of worship are de facto toward God, whether their practitioners possess the knowledge to recognize the

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[30] Merguerian and Najmabadi, "Whose Best Story?," 500.

[31] Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art?*, 239.

transcendental divine or not."[32] While I suggest that Zulaykhā does, in fact, recognize "the transcendental divine" in both her love for Yūsuf and her idolatry, I nonetheless take Shaw's use of Ibn ʿArabī's thought as a source to explain or clarify aspects of Jāmī's narrative as my starting point.

Indeed, Shaw is only one of a few scholars who have analyzed Jāmī's poetry in relation to the cosmological and metaphysical views that he espoused. Two other scholars who have, like Shaw, used Ibn ʿArabī's thought to interpret aspects of *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā* are Michael Barry and Thibaut d'Hubert. Barry does this in the context of interpreting a painting by Bihzād (d. 1535)—a contemporary and associate of Jāmī—that depicts Zulaykhā's seduction of Yūsuf in the seven-chambered palace.[33] Thibaut d'Hubert, for his part, uses Ibn ʿArabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* to elucidate the prologue chapters *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*, in which Jāmī outlines a cosmological theory of love.[34]

However, all of these scholars fall short in not using Jāmī's own prose texts on the views of the so-called "School" of Ibn ʿArabī, or the "Akbarian" school. Instead of analyzing how exactly Jāmī interpreted Ibn ʿArabī, they put Ibn ʿArabī in the role of a direct source, which sidelines the centuries-long tradition of interpretation of Ibn ʿArabī's views that stand between

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[32] Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art?*, 242.

[33] Michael Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465–1535)* (Flammarion, 2004), 223–227. Though Bihzād's painting is included in a manuscript of Saʿdī's (d. 1291 or 1292) *Būstān*, a text that also includes an account of Zulaykhā's seduction of Yūsuf, Barry argues that Bihzād's painting does not illustrate Saʿdī's account but instead corresponds to Jāmī's. His interpretations of Jāmī's poem, and his translations of key passages, are cited by Shaw. See Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art?*, 236–242, 248–250.

[34] d'Hubert, "Foundational *Maḥabbat-nāma*s," 654–661.

his time and Jāmī's. I aim to remedy this in my analysis by relying on two of Jāmī's own prose works in which he elucidates his understanding of Akbarian thought: *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*, a commentary on Fakhr al-Dīn Irāqī's *Lamaʿāt*, and *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ fi sharḥ Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ*, a commentary on Ibn ʿArabī's own abridgement of his *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.[35] These texts by Jāmī have been relatively ignored in the recent scholarship, despite numerous recent studies on Jāmī's philosophical and theologically rational texts defending Akbarian thought. Indeed, as I show in the next section of this introduction, though the field of Jāmī studies has ballooned in the last two decades, both a fuller appreciation of all of his texts dealing with Akbarian thought, and more precise accounts of how, if at all, Akbarian thought affected Jāmī's poetic output, remain desiderata.

0.3. Jāmī Studies

In his 2013 monograph on Jāmī, Hamid Algar noted that until that point, "the only monograph on Jami yet written in a European language" was "Ye. E. Bertel's, 'Dzhami' in his *Izbrannye Trudy: Navoi i Dzhami* (Moscow, 1965), pp. 209–79."[36] Much work had, of course, been done in Persian, including three books on Jāmī's life and career that continue to remain useful points of reference, by ʿAlī Aṣghar Ḥikmat, Najīb Māyil Haravī, and Aʿlā Khān Afṣaḥzād.[37] As noted by Algar, Ḥikmat's work takes a laudatory approach to the Timurid

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[35] Jāmī, *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*, ed. Hādī Rastgār Muqaddam Gawharī (Muʾassasih-i Bustān-i Kitāb-i Qum, 2011); Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ fi sharḥ Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ*, 2nd ed., ed. William C. Chittick (Muʾassasih-i Muṭālaʿāt va Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1370/1992).

[36] Algar, *Jami*, 139.

[37] ʿAlī Aṣghar Ḥikmat, *Jāmī: Mutaḍammin-i taḥqīqāt dar tārīkh-i aḥvāl va āthār-i manẓūm va nushūr-i khātim al-shuʿarā* (Chāpkhānih-i Bānk-i Millī-i Īrān, 1321/1942); Najīb Māyil Haravī, *Jāmī* (Ṭarḥ-i Naw, 1377/1998); Aʿlā Khān Afṣaḥzād, *Naqd va bar rasī-i āthār va sharḥ-i aḥvāl-i Jāmī* (Mīrās̲-i Maktūb, 1378/1999).

polymath's output, while Haravī's is harshly critical, arguing for Jāmī's poetic mediocrity.[38] In Algar's assessment, Afṣaḥzād's work takes a middle-way approach that is neither too critical nor too celebratory.[39] Algar's monograph on Jāmī filled the gap that the author had perceived in the scholarship by providing an overview of the poet's life and thought, including his engagement with Akbarian thought and his role as a member of the Naqshbandī Sufi order.[40]

While not a monograph, the most comprehensive biographical study of Jāmī in English is Ertuğrul Ökten's doctoral dissertation.[41] Ökten builds on the three Persian-language biographies that Algar mentions, as well as a number of primary sources, to effectively contextualize Jāmī's career within late Timurid society and its intellectual and social developments. He convincingly shows how Jāmī was a spokesperson for the philosophical views of Ibn ʿArabī in late Timurid Herat. Jāmī connected Ibn ʿArabī's views to those of scholars who were already well-respected in Jāmī's context, such as Ghazālī (d. 1111 CE), Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273 CE), and certain important members of the Kubrawī Sufi order, such as Saʿd al-Dīn Ḥamawī (d. 1253 CE), who

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[38] Algar, *Jami*, 137.

[39] Algar, *Jami*, 138.

[40] In the final chapter of his monograph, Algar provides a brief list of prior sources that treat the subject of Jāmī's Sufism. These sources are: S. Āl-i Rasūl, *ʿIrfān-i Jāmī dar Majmūʿih-i Āṯārash. Vizārat-i Farhang u Irshād-i Islāmī*, 1383/2004); William Chittick, "The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jāmī," *Studia Islamica* 51 (1979): 135–57; Hamid Algar, "Jāmi ii. and Sufism," in Encyclopaedia Iranica Online, Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, 1996–, article published December 15, 2008; last modified April 10, 2012, https://iranicaonline.org/articles/jami-ii; Sajjad Rizvi, "The Existential Breath of *al-Raḥmān* and the Munificent Grace of *al-Raḥīm*: the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* of Jāmī and the School of Ibn ʿArabī," *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 8, no. 1 (2006): 58–87; and Hamid Algar, "Jāmī and Ibn 'Arabī: *Khātam al-Shu'arā'* and *Khatam al-Awliyā'*," *Ishraq: Islamic Philosophy Yearbook* 3 (2012): 138–158. See Algar, *Jami*, 142.

[41] Ertuğrul I. Ökten, "Jāmī (817–898/1414–1492): His Biography and Intellectual Influence in Herat" (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 2007), ProQuest (Order No. 3262326).

was a student of the order's founder, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 1221 CE).[42] Ökten's work presents a detailed account of the scope of Jāmī's learning and his activities as a scholar and poet in Timurid Herat, though Ökten does not provide a detailed account of Jāmī's own formulation or version of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrines. Indeed, he states that, at the time of his writing, "One of the problems that still awaits further research is Jāmī's interpretation or understanding of Ibn al-'Arabi."[43] However, he does provide the fascinating insight that Jāmī's adoption of Ibn Arabī's doctrines allowed him to "sustain/develop a critical attitude towards the scholarly and spiritual environment of his time," including countering both messianic groups, on the one hand, and rationalist thinkers, such as the followers of Masʿūd b. ʿUmar Taftāzānī (d. ca. 1389), on the other.[44] Another dissertation that appeared a year after Ökten's, by Shadchehr, covers much of the same ground as Ökten's but in less detail. Her work only very briefly notes that Ibn ʿArabī's views were influential for Jāmī's work without presenting much evidence to demonstrate this point.[45]

In the years since Algar's monograph, much scholarship has been done on Jāmī's prose texts on Sufism, though many of them remain understudied. These texts by Jāmī include, in addition to the two mentioned above: *Lavāʾiḥ*, a brief treatise summarizing Naqshbandī and

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[42] Ökten, "Jāmī," 318, 330–331.

[43] Ökten, "Jāmī," 303

[44] Ökten, "Jāmī," 326–333, quotation at 326.

[45] Farah Fatima Golparvaran Shadchehr, "Abd al-Rahman Jami: 'Naqshbandi Sufi, Persian Poet'" (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2008), 86–88.

Akbarian views;[46] *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, a lexical and semantic commentary on the unabridged *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*;[47] *Lavāmiʿ*, a commentary on the "Wine Ode" of Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 1235 CE);[48] and *Sharḥ-i rubāʿiyyāt*, a commentary on his own quatrains on Akbarian themes.[49] All of these texts, in addition to *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt* and *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ fi sharḥ Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ*, remain understudied. For example, to my knowledge, the most extensive English-language study of the *Lavāʾiḥ*, apart from Chittick's footnotes that are appended to his translation of it, is Paul Wormser's article on the Malay poet Ḥamza Fanṣūrī's (d. 1527 CE) adaptation of Jāmī's text.[50] Similarly, the primary method of studying *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt* has been to analyze its transmission to, and reception in, China.[51] (Though Chittick and Wilson, in their translation of

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[46] Jāmī, *Bahāristān va rasāʾil-i Jāmī*, ed. Aʿlākhān Afsaḥzād et al. (Mīrāṯ-i Maktūb, 2000), 439–482. For an English translation supplemented with insightful notes, see Sachiko Murata, *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light: Wang Tai-yü's* Great Learning of the Pure and Real *and Liu Chih's* Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm*; with a New Translation of Jāmī's* Lawāʾiḥ *from the Persian by William C. Chittick* (State University of New York Press, 2000). For an additional English translation, see Jāmī, *Lawāʾiḥ, a treatise on Sufism (facsimile of an old ms.), with a translation by E.H. Whinfield, and Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḳazvīnī, and pref. on the influence of Greek philosophy upon Sufism* (Royal Asiatic Society, 1906).

[47] Jāmī, *Sharḥ al-Jāmīʿalā fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. ʿĀṣim Ibrāhīm al-Khayyālī al-Ḥusaynī al-Shādhilī al-Darqawī (Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2004).

[48] Jāmī, *Bahāristān va rasāʾil-i Jāmī*, 337–406.

[49] Jāmī, *Sih risāla dar taṣavvuf*, ed. Īraj Afshār (Intishārāt-i Farhang-i Īrān-i Zamīn, 1360/1980 or 1981), 41–103.

[50] Paul Wormser, "The Recreation of Jāmī's *Lavāʾiḥ* by Ḥamza Fanṣūrī," in *Jāmī in Regional Contexts*, 367–377.

[51] See Yiming Shen, "Jāmī and His Texts in China Proper," in *Jāmī in Regional Contexts*, 424–460; Shen, "Jāmī, a Legend in China: A Study of the Transmission and Transformation of Jāmī's Texts in China," *Iranian Studies* 54, nos. 1–2 (2021): 127–142, https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2020.1745625.

ʿIrāqī's *Lamaʿāt*, do periodically refer to Jāmī's *Ashiʿʿat* in their notes and commentary.)[52] *Sharḥ-i rubāʿiyyāt* is the subject of a recent study by Ève Feuillebois-Pierunek, which examines its main themes with reference to secondary sources on Ibn ʿArabī, though without comparison to Jāmī's other Sufi texts.[53] The most extensively studied of the above texts is *Lavāmiʿ*, which is the subject of an article and a dissertation by Marlene DuBois.[54] DuBois's article is a translation and commentary on a portion of the *Lavāmiʿ*, building on William Chittick's earlier partial commentary and translation,[55] while her dissertation primarily focuses on critiquing Western translations of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Wine Ode that fail to recognize its Qurʾānic and Akbarian underpinnings, which Jāmī's *Lavāmiʿ* helps to reveal. Perhaps the most studied of Jāmī's prose works, in recent years, is his Arabic-language prose work, *al-Durra al-fākhira*, in which he aims to show the superiority of the School of Ibn ʿArabī to both the philosophers and the theologians (*mutakallimūn*).[56] It has been the subject of numerous recent articles and the main focus of a

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[52] William C. Chittick and Peter Lamborn Wilson, trans., *Divine Flashes*, by Fakhruddin 'Iraqi (Paulist Press, 1982).

[53] Ève Feuillebois-Pierunek, "Jāmī's *Sharḥ-i rubāʿiyyāt dar vaḥdat-i vujūd*: Merging Akbarian Doctrine, Naqshbandī Practice, and Persian Mystical Quatrain," in *Jāmī in Regional Contexts*, 343–366.

[54] Marlene DuBois, "Jāmī and the Wine of Love: Akbarian Sparks of Divine Light," in *Islamic Thought and the Art of Translation: Texts and Studies in Honor of William C. Chittick and Sachiko Murata*, ed. Mohammed Rustom (Brill, 2022), 178–201; DuBois, "'Abd al-Rahman Jami's *Lawami'*: A Translation Study" (PhD diss., Stony Brook University, 2010), http://hdl.handle.net/1951/55413.

[55] William C. Chittick, "Jami on Divine Love and the Image of Wine," *Studies in Mystical Literature* 1, no. 3 (1981): 193–209, repr., Muḥyīddīn Ibn 'Arabī Society, 2019, https://ibnarabisociety.org/jami-on-divine-love-and-the-image-of-wine-william-chittick/.

[56] Nicholas Heer, ed., *al-Durra al-fākhira fī taḥqīq madhhab al-ṣūfiyya wa-l-mutakallimīn wa-l-ḥukamāʾ al-mutaqaddimīn: bih inḍimām-i ḥawāshī-yi muʾallif va sharḥ-i ʿAbd al-Ghafūr Lārī* (McGill University-Tehran Branch, 1358/1979). For recent studies of this work, see Ulrich Rudolph, "Philosophie, theologie et mystique au IXe/XVe siècle: Le témoignage de ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ǧāmī (m. 898/1492)," in *La philosophie arabe à l'étude : Sens, limites et défis d'une discipline moderne*, ed. Jean-Baptiste Brenet and Olga Lizzini (VRIN, 2019), 393–408;

recent doctoral dissertation by Sami.[57] Additionally, though *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ fi sharḥ Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ* has not been the subject of an independent study, it has been cited by Ali in his recent scholarly overview of Ibn ʿArabī's school.[58] Ali's work, alongside the abovementioned studies on *al-Durra al-fākhira*, is one of the first works to situate Jāmī within the centuries-spanning textual corpus of Ibn ʿArabī's followers.[59] These additional members of Ibn ʿArabī's school include: Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 1274 CE), who was ʿIrāqī's teacher; Muʾayyid al-Dīn ibn Maḥmūd al-Jandī (d. between 1292 and 1301 CE) and Saʿīd al-Dīn al-Farghānī (d. 1300 CE), both of whom were al-Qūnawī's students; ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. 1335 CE), a student of al-Jandī; and Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, a student of al-Kāshānī (d. 1350 CE).[60] In using Jāmī's own writings on Ibn ʿArabī's thought, not only *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ* but also *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*, this dissertation follows the trend of recognizing Jāmī as an active contributor to the intellectual and

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Rudolph, "ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī (d. 898/1492) on the Eternity of the World," *The Muslim World* 107, no. 3 (July 2017): 537–548, https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12201; Florian Schwarz, "The Arab Reception of Jāmī in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: *al-Fawāʾid al-ḍiyāʾiyya* and *al-Durra al-fākhira*," in *Jāmī in Regional Contexts*, 177–195.

[57] Muhammad Sami, "The Divine Origins of Philosophy: Sufism, Speculation, and the Path to Wisdom in the Akbarian Synthesis of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2024).

[58] Mukhtar H. Ali, *Philosophical Sufism: An Introduction to the School of Ibn al-ʿArabī* (Routledge, 2022). Ali cites Jāmī's work a total twenty-one times.

[59] Compare, for instance, Ali's work with Caner K. Dagli, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture: From Mysticism to Philosophy* (Routledge, 2016). Dagli, like Ali, provides an overview of Ibn ʿArabī's school, but he omits Jāmī from his discussion.

[60] Ali, *Philosophical Sufism*, 11–18. The *Naqd al-al-nuṣūṣ* is particularly well-suited to illustrating Jāmī's intellectual engagement and familiarity with Ibn ʿArabī's school, and not just the Greatest Shaykh himself. As Feuillebois-Pierunek has pointed out, this text "draws on Qūnawī and other previous commentators, such as Jandī, Farghānī, Kāshānī, and Qayṣarī. About 65% of the book comprises verbatim quotation from these commentators." Feuillebois-Pierunek, "Jāmī's *Sharḥ-i rubāʿiyyāt*," 343.

textual tradition of Ibn ʿArabī's school while refining the approach of scholars such as Shaw, Barry, and d'Hubert, who have used Ibn ʿArabī's thought to explain aspects of *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*.

In making use of Akbarian thought, and Jāmī's engagement with it, as a source for my interpretation of the poem, my goal is not to replace a generic Sufi allegorical reading—which, as described above, interprets Zulaykhā to be a stand-in for a Sufi seeker—with a specifically Akbarian one. Indeed, I follow d'Hubert's lead in this. He writes,

> Although Jāmī is very systematic in his recourse to Ibn ʿArabī's terminology, we should not see the narrative of *YZ* as a purely allegorical story in which each character would represent one abstract notion of the doctrine of love. The doctrine of love exposed in *YZ* actually does not allow the identification of any of the character[s] with the "divine beloved," and Zulaykhā as well as Yūsuf and the other characters of the story are all parts of the divine epiphany.[61]

I agree with d'Hubert's point that no character in the story can be understood as allegorically representing one concept or notion from the thought of Ibn ʿArabī and his school, even as this system of thought can explain such aspects of the story as Zulayhkā's blamelessness in both her love for Yūsuf and her idolatry, as I will show.

One way to avoid falling into an overly determined allegorical reading of the poem is to look for intertexts and possible sources beyond the corpus of Ibn ʿArabī and his school. Two recent studies of another one of Jāmī's *maṯnavī*s, *Salāmān u Absāl*, are instructive in this regard. Lingwood's monograph and Fayyaz's dissertation on this text argue for Jāmī's incorporation of a distinctly Avicennian, Neoplatonic philosophical framework into the poem's plot.[62] Both

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[61] d'Hubert, "Foundational *Maḥabbat-nāma*s," 661.

[62] Chad G. Lingwood, *Politics, Poetry, and Sufism in Medieval Iran: New Perspectives on Jāmī's* Salāmān va Absāl (Brill, 2014), 138–160; Parwana Fayyaz, "Poetry and Poetics: the Sufi Eye and the Neoplatonic Vision in Jāmī's *Salāmān u Absāl*" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2020), https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.62853. See also

scholars also highlight *Salāmān u Absāl*'s narrative and literary intertexts and sources in addition to purely philosophical ones, such as Ibn Sīnā's earlier version of the story—as recounted in commentaries by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209 CE) and Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 1274 CE)—and Ibn Ṭufayl's (d. 1185 or 1186 CE) references to characters named Salāmān and Absāl in his *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*.[63] Both studies, however, offer only a superficial analysis of how Akbarian thought could be used as an interpretive lens for *Salāmān u Absāl*, and neither author engages with Jāmī's own philosophical writings.[64] I follow Lingwood and Fayyaz's example by accounting for a broad range of potential philosophical and literary sources and intertexts for *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*, such as al-Ghazālī's *Kīmiyā-i Saʿādat*,[65] a fifteenth-century account of the Prophet Muḥammad's *miʿrāj*,[66] and Niẓāmī's *Haft paykar*,[67] to name just a few.

The broad range of potential intertexts for *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā* is both justified and explained by recent scholarship on Jāmī's role in the Timurid Sultanate's overall cultural project. Losensky's 1998 monograph, *Welcoming Fighānī*, argues that the Timurid cultural project was

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Fayyaz, "Jami's Rhetoric of Old Age and Aging in *Salaman va Absal*," *Afghanistan* 5, no. 1 (2022): 30–59, https://doi.org/10.3366/afg.2022.0083.

[63] Lingwood, *Politics, Poetry, and Sufism*, 11–14; Fayyaz, "Poetry and Poetics," 53–59.

[64] Lingwood, *Politics, Poetry, and Sufism*, 133–160; Fayyaz, "Poetry and Poetics," 165–204.

[65] al-Ghazālī, *Kīmiyā-i Saʿādat*, ed. Ḥusayn Khadīvjam (Markaz-i Intishārāt-i ʿIlmī va Farhangī 1380/2001).

[66] W. M. Thackston, "A Paris *Miʿrājnāma*," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 18 (1994): 263–299.

[67] Niẓāmī, *Haft paykar*, ed. Bihrūz Sarvatiyān (Muʾassasih-i Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1389/2011).

one of consciously standardizing and formalizing a canon of Persian literature.[68] Jāmī was directly involved in this process. For example, his *Bahāristān* served as a "greatest hits" for the Persian lyric tradition that preceded him.[69] The Timurids' cultural project was not simply borne out of an antiquarian interest, however. It had political stakes, as Toutant has pointed out in his work on Jāmī's contemporary, ʿAlī Shīr Navāʾī (d. 1501 CE), another poet linked to Bāyqarā's court. Toutant writes,

> What has been called a Renaissance was the result of an intensive imitation process. In fact the Timurid court consciously immersed itself in the media and standards of the 'Persianate cultural complex.' One of the central issues facing Timurid rulers was the need, as foreign Turkic [conquerors,] to establish themselves as legitimate rulers in the Iranian monarchical tradition. It is undoubtedly true that Timurid calligraphy, painting, decorative arts, and architecture all give convincing testimony of the dynasty's energetic and conscious cultivation of Persianate art forms.[70]

Toutant further identifies three trends in Timurid cultural patronage and production: "timuridization," which involves "a conscious affirmation of Timurid charisma through overt references to the funder of the dynasty"; standardization, already described above; and "sufization,"[71] which Toutant explains as a growing interest in Sufism at the Timurid court that coincided with the social and political prominence of the (Khwājagān-)Naqshbandī order in

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[68] Paul E. Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal* (Mazda, 1998), 145–54.

[69] Franklin Lewis, "To Round and Rondeau the Canon: Jāmī and Fānī's Reception of the Persian Lyrical Tradition," in *Jāmī in Regional Contexts*, 463–567.

[70] Marc Toutant, "Nawā'ī's *Khamsa* in the Light of Timurid Cultural Policies," in *АЛИШЕР НАВОИЙ ВА XXI АСР* [ʿAlī Shīr Navāʾī and XXI Century] (Tashkent: Tamaddun, 2017), 82.

[71] Toutant, "Nawā'ī's *Khamsa*," 82. See also Toutant, *Un empire de mots: pouvoir, culture et soufisme à l'époque des derniers Timourides au miroir de la* Khamsa *de Mīr ʿAlī Shīr Nawāʾī* (Leuven: Peeters, 2016).

Herat, to which Jāmī himself belonged.[72] Like Toutant, Subtelny has recently produced a valuable analysis of another of Jāmī's contemporaries, Vāʿiẓ-i Kāshifī (d. 1504 or 1505 CE), outlining his "Persian project," of translating, adapting, "reviving, renewing, and updating" a vast range of Arabic and Persian works in genres ranging from occult sciences to rhetoric.[73] Her essay on Kāshifī follows a book-length study by van Ruymbeke on his updating and adapting one particular literary work for a contemporary Timurid audience: *Kalila and Dimna*.[74] Vāʿiẓ-i Kāshifī, like Jāmī, was also patronized by Ḥusayn Bāyqarā, and I suggest that his adaptations of Arabic language works into Persian so that they could be more accessible to a Persian-literate audience in Herat resemble some of Jāmī's own efforts. These include his *Lavāʾiḥ*, mentioned above, which is a Persian-language summation of Akbarian views, and his translation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's "Poem of the Sufi Way," or the "*Tāʾiyya*."[75] Thus, one might recognize a common court culture under Bāyqarā—in which Arabic works were adapted for Persian audiences as part of the overall Timurid project of legitimation—as a major factor behind Jāmī's literary output.

0.4. Dissertation Outline

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[72] Marc Toutant, "What is at Stake in the Frame Story? A Timurid Reshaping of the Romance of Bahrām Gūr," *Iranian Studies* 56 (October 2023): 651–2, https://doi.org/10.1017/irn.2022.29. For an account of the rise of this order in the Timurid capital, see Jürgen Paul, "The Rise of the Khwajagan-Naqshbandiyya Sufi Order in Timurid Herat," in *Afghanistan's Islam: From Conversion to the Taliban*, ed. Nile Green (University of California Press, 2016), 71–86.

[73] Maria Subtelny, "A Man of Letters: Hoseyn Vaʿez Kashefi and His Persian Project," in *The Timurid Century*, ed. Charles Melville (I.B. Tauris, 2020), 129.

[74] Christine van Ruymbeke, *Kāshefi's* Anvār-e Sohayli*: Rewriting* Kalila and Dimna *in Timurid Herat* (Brill, 2016).

[75] Jāmī, *Tāʾiyya-yi ʿAbd al-Raḥmān-i Jāmī: Tarjuma-yi Tāʾiyya-yi Ibn-i Fāriḍ bih inḍimām-i sharḥ-i Maḥmūd-i Qayṣarī bar Tāʾiyya-yi Ibn-i Fāriḍ*, ed. Ṣādiq Khūrshā (Tehran: Mīrāṯ-i Maktūb, 1997).

This dissertation is organized into three main chapters followed by a conclusion. In chapter one, I analyze Jāmī's theoretical account of love as he presents it in chapters 10–12 of *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*. I argue, contrary to existing scholarship, that the primary intertext for these chapters is not Ibn ʿArabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-makiyya* but instead ʿIrāqī's *Lamaʿāt*. Nonetheless, in adducing evidence from Jāmī's commentary on the *Lamaʿāt*, I show that the poet is reading ʿIrāqī through the lens of Ibn ʿArabī. Furthermore, I argue that the theory that he presents, according to which the world is nothing other than a manifestation of God's own beauty, includes an internal tension. Jāmī's theoretical account of love both creates the expectation that Zulaykhā will abandon the love of Yūsuf's physical form to love God directly—as argued by most scholarly accounts of the poem, already discussed in this introduction—and provides the groundwork for the subversion of this expectation. Essentially, if God is manifest in all the forms of the world, including Yūsuf's form, then Zulaykhā's love for Yūsuf already entails her love for God. Spelling out why Zulaykhā need not redirect her love from Yūsuf to God—because such a notion of redirection would contradict Jāmī's understanding of the world as nothing other than a manifestation of God—will be developed more extensively later in this dissertation.

Chapter one concludes with a discussion of the character of Bāzighih, whose trajectory aligns with what scholars have believed to be Zulaykhā's trajectory. Bāzighih falls in love with Yūsuf on account of hearing about his beauty in Egypt. When she meets him, before he enters Zulaykhā's household, he tells her that she should love God instead of him, because he is simply a reflection of God's beauty. She follows his guidance and lives out the rest of her days worshipping God in solitude. Bāzighih represents the trajectory that Zulaykhā is expected to follow.

In chapter two, I demonstrate that Zulaykhā does not, in fact, follow the trajectory anticipated by Jāmī's theory of love and Bāzighih's own character arc. Her departure from this trajectory embodies aspects of Jāmī's theory of love—drawn from ʿIrāqī and Ibn ʿArabī—while transgressing against other aspects of it. I show that Zulaykhā is aware of God as the source of Yūsuf's beauty from the very beginning. This is the "meaning" behind his "form." Furthermore, I closely analyze both Zulaykhā's suffering and her destruction of her idol, which are two pieces of evidence that have been central in scholarly arguments in favor of reading her arc as one of transcending the forms of the world to love God directly. I argue that both her suffering and her idolatry reveal her attachment to forms, all the way to the story's end, but that this attachment to form can be explained by Jāmī's understanding of Ibn ʿArabī's views on idolatry.[76] Jāmī seems to agree with Ibn ʿArabī's view that God's immanence, also referred to as "similarity" (*tashbīh*) with the world, is as true as God's transcendence (*tanzīh*), or incomparability with the world. One must not lose sight of either, and Zulaykhā's idolatry can be understood as her recognition of God's *tashbīh* alongside God's *tanzīh*. Jāmī writes in his commentaries on Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* that God can only be known through the forms of the world in which God is manifest, and God is worshipped in every form.

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[76] My analysis is indebted to Nair's recent monograph on the interpretive controversies surrounding Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ* that lasted for centuries after his death, in which Nair devotes an entire chapter to the problem of idolatry. Arjun Nair, *Interpreting Ibn ʿArabī: Philosophy, Theology, and Exegesis in Later Islam* (Routledge, 2026), especially 67–102. Though Nair's work focuses primarily on the commentaries of Shaykh-i Makkī Kāzarūnī (d. 926/1519–1520) and ʿAbd al- Rasūl Barzinjī (d. 1103/1691), he cites Jāmī's commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ* and its abridgment throughout his footnotes, alongside citations of other members of Ibn ʿArabī's school, to illustrate the school's general position on various interpretive issues. He rarely singles out Jāmī's texts for close analysis, and he does not quote from him at all in his chapter on idolatry.

In chapter three, I build on my arguments in chapter two by postulating that for Jāmī, just as God can only be known in manifest form, so too can God only be loved by means of form.[77] This is illustrated by Yūsuf's transformation from beloved to lover. I demonstrate how Zulaykhā takes an active role in transforming Yūsuf and how his evolution can be understood as a process of ascent toward God analogous to the Prophet Muḥammad's night journey and ascent to heaven (*miʿrāj*). In making my argument, I depart from the convention of reading *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā* as a direct response to Niẓāmī's *Khusraw va Shīrīn* and instead use Niẓāmī's *Haft paykar* as my main intertext. I argue that Yūsuf's transformation from beloved to lover shows that romantic and erotic love for a human being, instead of an obstacle to be overcome on the path to God, actually brings one closer to God. Human love is a necessary component of love for God. This is further illustrated by the fact of Yūsuf and Zulaykhā alternating between the roles of lover and beloved. Human love allows for the boundaries of the self to dissipate and lovers to come to share one another's identity which, I argue, is the experiential proof of Jāmī's Akbarian cosmology in which nothing in the world exists except as God's own self-manifestation.

In the conclusion, I examine the implications of the plot's departure from the expected trajectory, outlined in chapter one of this dissertation, according to which human love is simply a stepping-stone to divine love. How might one interpret the fact that Zulaykhā never abandons her love for Yūsuf even at the poem's conclusion, and in fact dies wishing to join him in the afterlife? I suggest that her attachment to his form, while partially justified according to Jāmī's reading of Ibn ʿArabī's cosmology and his views on idolatry, as discussed in chapter two of the

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[77] In this, I follow Zargar. Cyrus Ali Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics Beauty, Love, and the Human Form in the Writings of Ibn 'Arabi and 'Iraqi* (University of South Carolina Press, 2011), especially 5, 57, 78.

dissertation, nonetheless can be understood as a form of excess, immoderation, or even heresy that brushes against, or even transgresses, the limits of Jāmī's theory. Particularly at issue is Zulaykhā's unique attachment to Yūsuf and her inability to recognize God in all the manifest forms of the world. However, for Jāmī, love might be the very context in which excess and transgression are acceptable, even admirable. Building on the work of Nair and Zargar, I end with a discussion on the importance of perplexity, or *ḥayra*, in the Akbarian system that Jāmī adopts, suggesting that Zulaykhā both embodies and provokes *ḥayra* as a necessary corrective to the limits of rationality and a gateway to truth.

0.5. Plot Summary

The following is a summary of the plot of Yūsuf u Zulaykhā to allow readers to better follow my discussion in the following dissertation chapters.

The masnavī opens with an invocation of God, asking for God's blessings before describing God's nature and providing proofs of God's existence. The poet then prays to God on behalf of the poor and needy, which is followed by his supplication to the ruler, Ḥusayn Bāyqarā, for the latter's kindness, generosity, and forgiveness of the poet's shortcomings. The next three sections of the poem are devoted to the Prophet Muḥammad: praising him, narrating his journey to heaven (*miʿrāj*), and seeking his intercession. Jāmī then devotes an entire section to praising and seeking the blessings of ʿUbaydallāh Aḥrār (d. 895/1490), "the leading Naqshbandi shaykh of the time," who was also Jāmī's *murshid* (spiritual guide). [78]

[78] Algar, *Jāmī*, 33.

Following these sections devoted to God and important personages, Jāmī provides three sections (10–12 in the current edition) that outline a precise metaphysical account of love, Beauty, and their role within an Akbarian account of creation. The following two sections (13–14) narrate Yūsuf's creation by God in the realm of the Unseen (*al-ghayb*) and Yūsuf's infancy in the household of his father, the prophet Yaʿqūb (Jacob). These sections, particularly section 14, mark the beginning of the plot proper, while also explaining Yūsuf's status as the most beautiful of all of God's creation, a fact that has consequences for how Zulaykhā and other characters in the story treat him. The next several sections (15–20) shift the focus entirely to Zulaykhā, first offering an account of her lineage and a head-to-foot description of her beauty (section 15) before narrating three consecutive episodes in which she sees images of Yūsuf in her dreams and falls in love with him. In the first two instances, which are separated by a year, Zulaykhā asks the image for its identity. She receives no reply, which causes her to become distraught and overwhelmingly lovesick, to the consternation of her nurse and maidservants. In the third dream episode, Yūsuf's image finally reveals its identity to her: he is the "ʿ*azīz* [vizier] of Egypt."[79] Zulaykhā is unaware that Yūsuf's dream-image is describing a future condition—at this point, Yūsuf is still a child. He will, in the future, become Egypt's vizier. Nonetheless, Zulaykhā's discovery of his identity causes her to rejoice. Her father, recognizing that her heart is set on marrying Egypt's vizier after she rejects all other suitors who had sent messengers asking for her hand in marriage (section 21), sends his own messenger to Egypt's current vizier (who is not Yūsuf). The current vizier accepts the offer of Zulaykhā's marriage (section 22). Zulaykhā sets out to Egypt in a lavish bridal entourage, only to arrive and discover that the vizier

[79] Jāmī, YZ, 61, lines 870–871.

is not the person she had seen in her dreams (sections 23–25). Though Egypt's people shower gifts upon the new bride, this does nothing to change Zulaykhā's inner sorrow and anguish (section 26). She spends years in grief over her lot while continuing to long for Yūsuf (section 27).

The narrative then shifts its focus back to Yūsuf, describing how his jealous brothers contrive to send him away from his home in Canaan (section 28), their jealousy only increasing after Yūsuf has a dream of the sun, moon, and planets—this dream symbolizes his preeminence over them (section 29). They continue their conspiracy against him (section 30), asking their father, Yaʿqūb, to allow them to take Yūsuf on a trip outside of Canaan (section 31). Though he is suspicious of their motives, he ultimately relents. The brothers take Yūsuf and throw him down a well (section 32). A caravan led by a man called Mālik arrives—he rescues Yūsuf from the well and intends to sell Yūsuf as a slave when his caravan arrives in Egypt (section 33). Upon hearing news of Yūsuf's arrival in Egypt, the king sends the vizier to Mālik. The vizier returns to the king with a report of Yūsuf's beauty, causing the king to want to purchase Yūsuf (section 34). Jāmī offers a detailed description of Yūsuf bathing in the Nile and being dressed in luxurious clothing before being presented on a dais outside of the king of Egypt's palace, where his beauty causes a commotion among the onlookers (section 35).

At this point in the story, the two protagonists' paths finally cross. Zulaykhā passes by the palace and sees the commotion. Upon coming closer, she discovers that the slave being presented for purchase is none other than the one whom she had seen in her dreams (section 36). She convinces her husband, the vizier, to purchase Yūsuf as a slave in their household, paying part of Yūsuf's cost out of her own bridal gift (section 37). The narrative then moves backward in time to describe a moment before Yūsuf's purchase by Zulaykhā. Upon his entry into Egypt,

another woman, Bāzighih, hears of Yūsuf's immense beauty and falls in love with him. She encounters him, and he tells her that she should redirect her love for him to the source and creator of his beauty, God. She follows Yūsuf's guidance, spending the remainder of her life in solitary worship of God (section 38).

The next few sections describe the early days of Yūsuf's life in Zulaykhā's household (sections 39–41). Zulaykhā treats Yūsuf almost like a son, dressing him and caring for him. She also learns that their hearts are connected when hearing the story of him being thrown in the well—she recalls that during that time, though she had never met Yūsuf in person, she felt pain in her own heart due to an unknown cause (section 40). Jāmī then devotes a section detailing Zulaykhā's ever-increasing desire to be romantically united with Yūsuf, though he outwardly seems to not reciprocate her feelings (section 42). Her nurse, recognizing Zulaykhā's lovesickness, asks her for its cause (section 43). Zulaykhā explains to her nurse her love for Yūsuf, and she sends her nurse on her behalf to disclose to Yūsuf her feelings for him. Yūsuf informs the nurse that he is unwilling to return Zulaykhā's affections because doing so would constitute both a sin contrary to God's laws and a betrayal of the vizier, who is like a father to him (section 44). When Zulaykhā goes before Yūsuf herself to seek his reciprocation of her love, he refuses her directly (section 45).

Zulaykhā then devises a scheme to deceitfully unite with Yūsuf: she sends him into her garden accompanied by her beautiful maidservants, hoping that one of them will succeed in seducing Yūsuf and that Zulayhkhā would be able to trade places with her in bed under the cover of night (section 46). This plan fails—Zulaykhā returns to the garden to discover Yūsuf preaching to the maidservants, who have abandoned both their plans to seduce him and their worship of idols (section 47). Embarrassed, Zulaykhā returns to her nurse, and the two form a

new plan to seduce Yūsuf (section 48). The nurse commissions the construction of a beautiful seven-chambered palace, filled with images of Yūsuf and Zulaykhā amorously united (section 49). When the palace is complete, Zulaykhā leads Yūsuf through it, making her final attempt to seduce him (sections 50). After the two reach the seventh, innermost chamber, Yūsuf almost relents but ultimately escapes after catching a glimpse of Zulaykhā's idol, which causes him shame before the one true God. Zulaykhā chases him, tearing his tunic from the back (section 51). When the two are discovered by the vizier, Zulaykhā wrongfully accuses Yūsuf of making advances against her, which spurs the vizier to put him in prison (section 52). Miraculously, a three-month old child of one of Zulaykhā's women suddenly begins to speak, demonstrating Yūsuf's innocence by pointing out that his tunic had been ripped from behind, not from the front (section 53).

The women of Egypt reproach Zulaykā for her obsession with her slave. Zulaykhā responds by bringing Yūsuf out before their assembly; his beauty is so overwhelming that each of the women cuts her own hand with the knife she is holding, instead of cutting the citron that she had been served (section 54). The Egyptian women excuse Zulaykhā, considering her to be blameless, and they convince Zulaykhā to send Yūsuf to prison due to his continued refusal to reciprocate her love (sections 55–56).

Zulaykhā almost immediately feels remorse for imprisoning her beloved, and her separation from him causes her to grieve (section 57). She goes to prison to glimpse him from afar (section 58), and she makes a habit of sending her maidservants to see him and report back to her about his state, while she nightly climbs to her castle's roof to look into his prison cell (section 59).

While in prison, Yūsuf develops a reputation as an accurate dream interpreter (section 60). This attracts the notice of Egypt's king, who sends for Yūsuf so that the latter can interpret one of the king's dreams (section 61). Yūsuf succeeds at the task, and the king frees him, honoring Yūsuf by making him vizier (section 62). This causes the death of the former vizier, Zulaykhā's husband, which leads Zulaykhā into poverty and ill health, conditions that are exacerbated by her continued suffering from Yūsuf's absence (section 63). Aged, penniless, and eventually sightless, Zulaykhā builds a hut near the royal road upon which Yūsuf and his entourage travel daily, taking comfort in hearing the sounds of his passing army (section 64). (At this point in the story, it appears that Yūsuf is no longer just the vizier but has risen to become king.) One day, she prays to her idol to be reunited with Yūsuf, and when the idol fails to answer her, she destroys it and asks God for the same, that she be reunited with her beloved (section 65). Yūsuf hears her prayers and asks one of his servants to bring Zulaykhā to him, though he is unaware of who she is. When she reveals her identity, Yūsuf expresses his compassion and love for her. He prays for her beauty, sight, and youth to be restored to her, and he is granted permission by the angel Gabriel to marry her (section 66). The two are married, and Yūsuf mirrors her earlier actions by ripping her tunic and building a seven-chambered palace, this one dedicated to worshipping God (sections 67–68). One night, years into their marriage, Yūsuf has a dream in which his parents tell him that it is time for him to join them in the afterlife (section 69). Zulaykhā is unable to cope with his death; she gouges out her eyes at his grave and soon after dies (section 70). The *maṯnavī* concludes with the poet rebuking heaven for causing suffering and misfortune (section 71), admonishing his son to strive for excellence (section 72), admonishing himself (section 73), and thanking God for the completion of the poem while asking God for blessing upon the sultan (section 74).

Chapter 1: Jāmī's Model of Human to Divine Love

1.1. Chapter Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to lay the foundation for a novel reading of both Zulaykhā's and Yūsuf's character arcs in *Yūsuf ū Zulaykhā*. I suggest that in three of the early chapters of the poem (specifically, chapters 10–12 in the edition of Afṣaḥzād et. al.), Jāmī offers a theory of love that forms the context for both Zulaykhā and Yūsuf's transformations into lovers and beloveds.[80] To date, the only scholarly analysis of these chapters comes from Thibaut d'Hubert who, in his illuminating article on the reception of Jāmī's *Yūsuf ū Zulaykhā* in Bengal, mistakenly reads these chapters of the *maṯnavī* as a summary of the views found in Ibn ʿArabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*.[81] I find this reading unconvincing and, in analyzing these chapters, I argue that the more likely source or intertext for Jāmī's views on love was Fakhr al-Dīn ʿIrāqī's *Lamaʿāt*. I demonstrate this not only through evidence from ʿIrāqī's text, but also on the basis of Jāmī's own commentary on the *Lamaʿāt*, titled *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*.[82] Jāmī wrote this commentary in 1481 CE, just two years before the completion of *Yūsuf ū Zulaykhā*.[83] I argue that Jāmī incorporated ʿIrāqī's figurative language—particularly imagery, symbolism, and metaphor—and furnished this language with Akbarian theoretical underpinnings. This can be seen clearly in *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*, in which Jāmī frequently glosses ʿIrāqī's poetic language with references to theoretical

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[80] Jāmī, *YZ*, 34–40.

[81] d'Hubert, "Foundational *Maḥabbat-nāma*s," 649–691.

[82] Jāmī, *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*.

[83] d'Hubert, "Foundational *Maḥabbat-nāma*s," 650.

aspects of Akbarian cosmology. In other words, if one were to argue that Jāmī's theory of love ultimately derives from Ibn ʿArabī's school, then the best evidence for this is, in fact, Jāmī's commentary on ʿIrāqī.

Not only does Jāmī offer us a theory of love—its origin and nature as a necessary response to the world's status as a manifestation of God's beauty—but he also offers a model for the lover's path from human to divine love. Indeed, in chapters 11 and 12 of the *maṯnavī*, Jāmī admonishes the reader to leave behind attachment to physical forms, including human beloveds, in order to love God directly. This gives the false impression that this is, for Jāmī, the central message of *Yūsuf ū Zulaykhā*. According to this model, the human object of love should lead the lover to recognizing God as the divine source of human beauty and, therefore, the only truly worthy object of love. Though Jāmī insists on this model in these prologue chapters, the remainder of this dissertation will challenge the story's conformity to this model.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into two sections. In section 2.2, I offer a close reading of chapter 10 of the *maṯnavī*, which outlines an account of beauty as synonymous with God's essence. In section 2.3, I turn to an analysis of chapters 11 and 12, which offer advice for the human lover of beauty. In both of these sections, I will illustrate Jāmī's use of concepts from the school of Ibn ʿArabī to expand upon images and metaphors that he seems to draw from ʿIrāqī's *Lamaʿāt*.

Taken together, these three chapters (10–12) communicate the idea that because God's beauty is the source of the beauty of all the forms of the world, the human being who comes to love such beauty must move from loving the form to the meaning it contains. The relationship between manifest forms (*ṣurāt*, sing, *ṣura*) and the intellectual meanings that these forms convey (*maʿānī*, sing. *maʿnā*) was a topic that occupied Sufi thinkers for centuries prior to Jāmī. As

William Chittick defines these terms, based on his reading of the opening chapter of Aḥmad Ghazālī's (d. 1126 CE) Persian-language treatise *Savāniḥ*, "[T]he word meaning (*maʿnā*)…in the technical Sufi sense…designates the unseen reality of which a form (*ṣūra*) is the visible appearance. The meanings are thus the multiple realities (*ḥaqāʾiq*) that pertain to the realm of the Haqiqah, the Reality in Itself."[84] This tension between form and meaning, and the capacity of forms to obscure their meanings, underlie Jāmī's insistence to all lovers that they ultimately abandon outward forms in order to directly love God's essence, which is the *meaning* of all outwardly beautiful forms, especially human beings.[85]

1.2. Jāmī's Cosmologicial Theory of Love as Outlined in Chapter 10: The Divine Origin of Love and Beauty

Chapters 10–12 of *Yūsuf ū Zulaykhā* do not narrate events from the plot but instead provide a philosophical account of love, including its nature and causes of love, and the necessary attributes or qualities of a lover. Chapter 10 is the longest and most detailed of these chapters, offering an account of love as a necessary response to the manifestation of God's Beauty (which is the same as God's essence) in the visible world. I propose the following

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[84] William Chittick, *Divine Love: Islamic Literature and the Path to God* (Yale University Press, 2013), 311. For the relevant passage from the *Savāniḥ*, in which Ghazāli describes meanings as virgin brides that must be impregnated by letters (*ḥurūf*) to give birth to language, i.e., words that are meaning-bearing visible forms, see Aḥmad Ghazālī, *Savāniḥ*, ed. Nasrollah Pourjavady (Intishārāt-i Bunyā va Farhang-i Īrān, 1359/1980), 1. For a translation of this passage, see Chittick, *Divine Love*, 312. Alexandre Papas notes, on the basis of evidence found in ʿAlī Shīr Navāʾī's (d. 1501 CE)'s eulogy for Jāmī, *Khamsat al-mutaḥayyirīn*, that Aḥmad Ghazālī's *Savāniḥ* was a topic of conversation between Jāmī and Navāʾī. See Alexandre Papas, "Individual Sanctity and Islamization in the Ṭabaqāt Books of Jāmī, Navāʾī, Lāmiʿī, and Some Others," in *Jāmī in Regional Contexts*: *The Reception of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī's Works in the Islamicate World, ca. 9th/15th-14th/20th Century*, ed. Thibaut d'Hubert and Alexandre Papas (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 380.

[85] Throughout, I translate *maʿnā* as "meaning," though depending on context, it can also be translated as "concept," or "mental content." See Alexander Key, *Language between God and the Poets:* Maʿnā *in the Eleventh Century* (University of California Press, 2018).

scheme as a summary of Jāmī's account in this chapter, and I will provide textual evidence to illustrate each part of this scheme:

a) God's essence is Beauty.

b) By its very nature, God's essence must manifest itself in the world. The creation of the world is none other than God's self-manifestation in the various forms of the world.[86] All beauty in the world is thus derived, or borrowed from, the beauty of God's essence and attributes.

c) The manifestation of this beauty in the world gives rise to lovers and beloveds. When a human loves another human being, the real object of their love is God's beauty. However, the human form both reflects and obscures God's beauty, because lovers fail to recognize the divine meaning contained in the outward form.

In what follows, I make references to ʿIrāqī's *Lamaʿāt*, Jāmī's *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*, and secondary literature to illustrate how Jāmī's account of love relates to the cosmology of the school of Ibn ʿArabī.

1.2.1. God's essence is Beauty.

Jāmī establishes, in the opening lines of chapter 10, that God's essence is simply beauty by describing beauty in the same way that he, and other followers of the school of Ibn ʿArabī, describe God's essence. Jāmī writes:[87]

307. In that solitary place where existence was unmarked	در آن خلوت که هستی بی‌نشان بود

[86] Throughout my analysis, I typically use "God, Godself, and God's" as God's pronouns, instead of "he," "she," or "they." However, in translations, I use "He," to translate *ū* when this pronoun refers to God.

[87] *YZ*, 34 (lines 307–310).

The world was hidden in the confined place of non-existence.	به کنج نیستی عالم نهان بود
308. There was a Being far from the image of duality Far from any talk of "we-ness," and "you-ness."	وجودی بود از نقش دویی دور ز گفت و گوی مایی و تویی دور
309. The Beauty free from the fetter of manifestations;[88] By its own light, it was manifest to itself.	جمال مطلق از قید مظاهر به نور خویش هم بر خویش ظاهر

In these first lines, Jāmī describes beauty (hereafter "Beauty") similarly to how he describes God's essence in the very first chapters of his *maṯnavī*. Beauty has existed since before the creation of the world: it exists from time immemorial. Beauty is singular and undifferentiated, unquantifiable and unqualifiable. These are all claims that Jāmī makes about God('s essence). For example, in chapter 1, Jāmī writes, "Being did not come to us from Him as a gift / Because He is, and He is Existence, and He grants Existence (*bih mā zān minnat-i hastī nih āmad / kih hast ū hastī ū hastī dih āmad*)."[89] This means that God is the source of all existence, the being that precedes and underlies all other being. This accords with Jāmī's point that Beauty existed prior to anything else existing.

A few lines later in chapter 1, Jāmī goes on to write, "God's essence is far removed from quality and quantity / It is even more far removed from [notions of] highness and lowness (*mubarrā ẕātash az chūnī va chandī / mubarrātar ze pastī ū bulandī*).[90]" In other words, God's essence cannot be characterized in ways that cause it to become differentiated. It is singular and

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[88] My translation of this line slightly modifies that of d'Hubert. See d'Hubert, "Foundational *Maḥabbat-nāma*s," 657. D'Hubert reads "jamāl-i muṭlaq az qayd-i maẓahir" as "a beauty free from the fetters of manifestations." I emphasize the definite article to suggest that this line is meant as a gloss on the previous one. Jāmī is defining God, the singular being of line 308, as also being the Beauty that exists prior to manifestation.

[89] Jāmī, YZ, 20, line 31.

[90] Jāmī, *YZ*, 20, line 34.

indivisible. Though this line from chapter 1 is a general, present-tense statement, and the opening lines of chapter 10, above, describe beauty in the past tense, this does not represent a contradiction. Because God's essence does not change over time, what was true of God's essence is currently true and will continue to be true. In chapter 2, Jāmī further describes God as completely singular and completely indivisible. He writes, "See one, know one, say 'one' / Desire one, proclaim one, seek one (*yakī bīn ū yakī dān ū yakī guy / yakī kvāh ū yakī kvhān ū yakī jūy*).[91]

Jāmī's view of God's essence as Being that precedes all other being, and as undifferentiated and therefore beyond qualification or quantification, aligns with the views of members of Ibn ʿArabī's school. Mukhtar Ali explains this school's position, drawing primarily from the work of al-Qayṣarī while supplementing it with texts from other followers of Ibn ʿArabī, as follows: "In theological terms, Being qua Being is the unknowable Essence of God, and that which is unknowable cannot be defined."[92] The "divine Essence" is "beyond the limitation of attributes and conditions."[93]

> Being qua Being is simple and does not accept division and partition. It is not composed of parts such as matter and form, since matter and form are both types of Being. If Being were composed of something it needs for its own existence, then it would precede itself since the composite parts would precede Being. Furthermore, quantity cannot be applied to Being since it is an accidental quality of bodies, which also necessitates Being for its existence. Being is not composed of mental attributes such as genus and differentia since both are by definition limitations of existence and require Being for their realization. Since Being

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[91] Jamī, *YZ*, 22, line 39.

[92] Ali, *Philosophical Sufism*, 32.

[93] Ali, *Philosophical Sufism*, 32-33.

pervades all things, it has neither limit nor definition and thus cannot be composed of genus and differentia.[94]

Returning to chapter 10 of *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*, we see Jāmī in the following lines elaborate on his point, in line 309, that Beauty was manifest only to itself. It was not manifest as a knowable entity in the world. Rather, it was known only to itself. Jāmī writes that Beauty was,

310. The Beloved capable of being witnessed in the bridal curtain of the Unseen— Its skirt was free from the suspicion of sin.	دلارا شاهدی در حجلهٔ غیب مبرّا دامنش از تهمت عیب
311. Its face is not within the mirror; Its locks were not drawn out by the comb-like hand.	نه با آیینه رویش در میانه نه زلفش را کشیده دست شانه
312. The east wind has not twisted a hair from its forelock; Its eye has seen no dust of collyrium.	صبا از طرّه‌اش نگسسته تاری ندیده چشمش از سرمه غباری
313. The hyacinth has not become the neighbor of its rose; Its verdure has not bound ornaments upon the rose.	نگشته با گلش همسایه سنبل نبسته سبزه‌اش پیرایه بر گل
314. Its face is clear of any down or mole; No eye has seen an image (*khiyāl*) of it.	رخش ساده از هر خطی و خالی ندیده هیچ چشمی زو خیالی
315. It would perform the song of belovedness to itself; It would play the game of loverness with itself.[95]	نوای دلبری با خویش می‌ساخت قمار عاشقی با خویش می‌باخت

In the above lines, Jāmī uses tropes from Persian lyric poetry's descriptions of the beloved to deny the knowability or outward manifestation of God's Essence, or God's Essential Beauty. Unlike the beautiful face of the beloved, God's Beauty cannot, in its Essence, be visible in a mirror. However, Jāmī will go on to explain that God's singular, beautiful Essence underlies

[94] Ali, *Philosophical Sufism*, 35.

[95] Jāmī, *YZ*, 35, line 315.

all the various perceptible manifestations of beauty in the world. Indeed, for Jāmī, as for his forebears in Ibn ʿArabī's school, the creation of the world is none other than God's self-manifestation.

The first level or stage of this self-manifestation, to which Jāmī alludes, is God's manifestation to Godself. This falls under the Akbarian concept of the First Entification (*al-taʿayyun al-awwal*, which could also be translated as "First Individuation,").[96] In the Akbarian scheme of creation, God is non-delimited, non-entified Being, but the first step in God's manifestation in the world is God's disclosure to Godself, which entails God's self-knowledge.[97] This entification or delimitation of the Divine Essence allows for the eventual creation of the manifest world, all of which is nothing more than a delimitation of the divine essence. However, the First Entification has two aspects. The first aspect is the absolute unity or unicity that allows for no conception of multitude, called *al-aḥadiyya*, or "exclusive unity" or "singularity."[98] This is what Jāmī refers to in line 308: God is singular, unified, and indivisible. The second aspect of the First Entification is *al-wāḥidiyya*, defined by scholars as "inclusive unity" because it contains within it the potential of all multiplicity; it is the unity that undergirds the apparent multiplicity of created things.[99] This potential multiplicity is caused by the multiplicity of the divine names, which are the first objects of God's self-knowledge, even though these names are identical with

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[96] For reasons for translating the Akbarian technical term *taʿayyun* as "entification" or "individuation," see, respectively, Dagli, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture*, 61; Ali, *Philosophical Sufism*, 23.

[97] Chittick and Wilson, introduction to *Divine Flashes*, 9–11.

[98] Ali, *Philosophical Sufism*, 19, 44; 57. Chittick and Wilson, introduction to *Divine Flashes*, 10.

[99] Chittick and Wilson, introduction to *Divine Flashes*, 10; Ali, *Philosophical Sufism*, 49, 57.

God's essence.[100] God's self-knowledge is implied in line 309, without reference to God's knowledge of God's divine names or attributes. For this reason, d'Hubert writes that this line refers to "when the essence of God was still in its primeval unity, not yet conscious of its beauty."[101] However, according to an Akbarian framework, God's knowledge of God's essence would necessarily entail God's knowledge of God's attributes and names, such as beauty, which are contained within God's essence. Line 315 emphasizes this point; God's only object of intellection is God in the First Entification, but God's cognition of Godself contains within it God's knowledge of God's attributes, like belovedness. Line 315 also speaks to God's self-sufficiency in the state of the First Entification: no manifest forms have come into existence yet, so God's activity is directed only at God.

These lines by Jāmī clearly echo the way ʿIrāqī describes the divine essence at the beginning of creation, which ʿIrāqī names "love" in the introduction (*muqaddimih*) of his *Lamaʿāt*, though Jāmī refers to it as both "beauty" and "the Beloved," as mentioned above.[102] In the first chapter of the *Lamaʿāt*, ʿIrāqī writes,

> اشتقاق عاشق و معشوق از عشق است و عشق در مقر خود از تعین منزه است و در حریم عین خود از بطون و ظهور مقدس ولیکن بهر اظهار کمال از آن روی که عین ذات خود است و صفات خود خود را در آینهٔ عاشقی و معشوقی بر خود عرضه کرد و حسن خود را بر نظر خود جلوه داد[103]

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[100] Chittick and Wilson, introduction to *Divine Flashes*, 6, 9; Ali, *Philosophical Sufism*, 73.

[101] d'Hubert, "Foundational *maḥabbat-nāmas*" 656.

[102] "Know that in each of these *Flashes* we make allusion to a reality beyond all entification. Call it Amourousness [*ḥubb*] or Love [*ʿishq*], let us not quarrel over words." Chittick and Wilson, *Divine Flashes*, 72. Cf. Fakhr al-Dīn ʿIrāqī, *Lamaʿāt*, ed. Muḥammad Khvājavī (Intishārāt-i Mawlā, 1363/1984), 47.

[103] ʿIraqī, *Lamaʿāt*, 49. I have removed Khvājavī's punctuation marks.

> The etymology of the words "lover" and "beloved" comes from "love." But Love, in its mansion, is free from entification, and in the sanctuary, its essence[104] is sanctified beyond concealment and manifestation. However, for the sake of manifesting perfection, on account of the fact that it (i.e., such perfection) is identical to its Essence and Attributes, it displayed itself to itself in the mirror of Loverness and Belovedness, and it adorned its Beauty before its gaze.

This passage closely resembles the opening lines of Jāmī's chapter, specifically line 309. Here we see that Jāmī's description of beauty closely resembles ʿIrāqī's description of Love. For these authors, God's essence, called either beauty or love, is in a state of being only manifest to itself in the condition of the First Entification. Indeed, Jāmī's commentary on this passage of ʿIrāqī explicitly calls it a description of the First Entification.[105] Specifically, in the sense of Inclusive Oneness, *wāḥidiyya*, which is one of the two senses of the First Entification, God knows Godself and all of God's attributes prior to the manifestation of visible forms. As ʿIrāqī explains, love manifests its own beauty to itself by becoming its own lover and beloved. Jāmī's line 315, above, echoes this exact point. As Jāmī explains in his commentary, when ʿIrāqī writes *iẓhār-i kamāl*, "the manifestation of perfection," this means "the perfection pertaining to the Essence and the Names."[106] In other words, God becoming God's own lover and beloved corresponds to the Inclusive Oneness aspect of the First Entification, in which God possesses knowledge of God's essence and names/attributes.

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[104] On the translation of *ʿayn* as "entity," "essence," or "identity," see Dagli, *Ibn al-ʿArabī*, 60–61.

[105] Jāmī, *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*, 73. Wilson and Chittick translate the title that Jāmī gives to this chapter of ʿIrāqī's text as, "On the fact that Love is the origin of the lover and the Beloved, how these two grow out of Love in the First Entification, and how each of them is in need of the other." Chittick and Wilson, *Divine Flashes*, 73.

[106] Jāmī, *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*, 74: *bahr-i iẓhār-i kamāl yaʿnī kamāl-i z̲ātī u asmāyī*. One can also translate this as "the totality pertaining to the Essence and Names."

The fact that Jāmī designates God's essence as "beauty" (*jamāl*) while ʿIrāqī uses "love" (*ʿishq*) does not necessarily mean that the two authors are referring to distinct entities. They are both referring to God's essence, but they are suggesting different human responses to the manifestation of this essence through their choice of terms. Both authors conceptually link love and beauty—ʿIrāqī writes that "beauty is loved on account of its own essence" (*jamāl maḥbūb bi-ẕāt-i khud ast*), implying that the necessary response to beauty is love. He prefaces this statement by quoting the prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*), "God is beautiful and loves beauty" (*inna Allāh jamīl yuḥibb al-jamāl*).[107] Even if, for ʿIrāqī, beauty is an attribute of God and not God's essence, the fact that ʿIrāqī sees God's essence and attributes as identical means that both authors are ultimately referring to the same entity: God's essence, which includes God's attributes. For example, ʿIrāqī writes that "the lover finds that God's names and attributes are God's essence, (*muḥibb asmāʾ-i va ṣifāt-i ū rā ʿayn-i ū yābad*).[108] In sum, for ʿIrāqī, beauty is an essential attribute of God that is inseparable from God's essence, while for Jāmī, Beauty and God's essence are the same.

Jāmī, for his part, seems to agree with ʿIrāqī that love and beauty are inseparable, and that beauty necessarily inspires love. For example, he titles his tenth chapter, which contains all of the lines from *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā* that have been discussed above, as follows:

در بیان آنکه هر یک از جمال و عشق مرغیست از آشیان وحدت پریده و بر شاخسار مظاهر کثرت اگر نوای عزّت معشوقیست از آنجاست و اگر نالهٔ محنت عاشقیست هم آنجاست

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[107] ʿIrāqī, *Lamaʿāt*, 70.

[108] ʿIrāqī, *Lamaʿāt*, 76.

> On Demonstrating that Each One, Beauty and Love, Is a Bird that Has Flown from the Nest of Unity and Rested on the Branches of the Manifestation of Multiplicity; Whether It Is the Song of the Glory of Belovedness Or the Complaint of the Torment of Loverness, It is Equally from that Place.[109]

This title is significant in conveying the fundamental unity of love and beauty, because both originate in the divine oneness that makes itself manifest in the multiple forms of the world. Furthermore, the fact that love is the necessary consequence of beauty's manifestation is conveyed not only by this chapter title, but also by line 315 of *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*, which has already been discussed above:

315. It would perform the song of belovedness to itself; It would play the game of loverness with itself.[110]	نوای دلبری با خویش می‌ساخت قمار عاشقی با خویش می‌باخت

As soon as God's essence becomes manifest to itself, it becomes its own lover and beloved. Therefore God's essence becomes manifest in the multiform world, then human beings (which are also manifestations of this same essence) come to be lovers and beloveds as well.

1.2.2. By its very nature, God's essence must manifest itself in the world. The creation of the world is none other than God's self-manifestation in the various forms of the world. All beauty in the world is thus derived, or borrowed from, the beauty of God's essence and attributes.

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[109] Jāmī, *YZ*, 34. My translation of this chapter's title closely resembles d'Hubert's. Cf. d'Hubert, "Foundational *Maḥabbat-nāma*s," 656. However, I differ from him in translating *maʿshūqī* and *ʿāshiqī* as "Belovedness" and "Loverness," i.e., the states of being either a beloved or a lover, instead of the singular nouns "a beloved" and "a lover." My choice is informed by ʿIrāqī's use of these terms in his *Lamaʿāt*, discussed below.

[110] Jāmī, *YZ*, 35, line 315.

Both Jāmī and ʿIrāqī agree that God's Essence, by its very nature, must manifest itself in the world. This is the second stage of the creation of the world, following God's manifestation to Godself. Jāmī describes this process as follows:[111]

316. However, given that it is is the law of beauty That the Beautiful One is, by its nature, constricted by the veil	ولی زانجا که حکم خوبروییست ز پرده خوبرو در تنگ خوییست
317. The Beautiful One has no capacity for modesty; If you close the door, the Beautiful One lifts their face from the window	نکو رو تاب مستوری ندارد ببندی در سر ز روزن برآرد

Jāmī then adduces examples from the natural world to emphasize his point that beauty cannot allow itself to remain concealed, before continuing:[112]

320. If such a meaning were to come to your mind— One that is a rare pearl on the thread of meanings—	تو را چون معنیی در خاطر افتد که در سلک معانی نادر افتد
321. You would not be able to abandon that thought; You would bring it out by means of speech or writing.	نیاری از خیال آن گذشتن دهی بیرون به گفتن یا نوشتن
322. Since beauty is everywhere, this is its demand. The first of this movement arose from the Pre-Eternal Beauty.	چو هر جا هست حسن اینش تقاضاست نخست این جنبش از حسن ازل خاست
323. It pitched its tent outside the sacred climes; It revealed itself to the horizons and all souls	برون زد خیمه ز اقلیم تقدّس تجلّی کرد بر آفاق و انفس
324. From every mirror it showed a face; In every place, discussion arose because of it.	ز هر آیینه‌ای بنمود روی به هر جا خاست از وی گفت و گویی

[111] Jāmī, *YZ*, 35.

[112] Jāmī, *YZ*, 35, lines 322–324.

The idea of God's essence (love/beauty) pitching its tent is seemingly borrowed from ʿIrāqī, who writes at the very start of his second chapter, "Love, like a sultan, wanted to pitch its tent in the desert. It opened the door to the treasury, scattered treasure upon the world" (*sulṭān-i ʿishq khvāst kih khaymih bi-ṣaḥrā zanad dar-i khazāyin bigushād ganj bar ʿālam pāshīd*).[113] ʿIrāqī follows this passage with a quatrain:[114]

It [Love] pitched its tent and raised its flag	چتر برداشت و برکشید علم
To bring together existence and non-existence	تا بهم بر زند وجود و عدم
The tumult of unrest-inducing love	بی‌قراری عشق شورانگیز
Cast blame and confusion upon the world.	شر و شوری فکند در عالم

Both authors agree that God's essence (Love/Beauty) desires, necessarily, to manifest itself in the world, that this manifestation resembles a sultan pitching his tent and raising his flag. Jāmī's imagery seems to be drawn directly from ʿIrāqī's text.

Before this moment of self-disclosure, ʿIrāqī writes that God would have said,[115]

In that moment when there was no trace of the two worlds,	آن دم که ز هر دو کون آثار نبود
On the tablet of existence, there was no mark of others	بر لوح وجود نقش اغیار نبود
I was beloved and lover, together	معشوقه و عشق تا بهم می‌بودیم
In the corner of that secluded place, when the world did not exist	در گوشه خلوتی که دیار نبود

[113] ʿIraqī, *Lamaʿāt*, 52.

[114] ʿIraqī, *Lamaʿāt*, 52.

[115] ʿIraqī, *Lamaʿāt*, 52–53.

The opening lines of Jāmī's chapter (307–309) clearly describe this same circumstance. Once more, these lines from Jāmī read:

307. In that solitary place where existence was unmarked The world was hidden in the confined place of non-existence.	در آن خلوت که هستی بی‌نشان بود به کنج نیستی عالم نهان بود
308. There was a Being far from the image of duality Far from any talk of "we-ness," and "you-ness."	وجودی بود از نقش دویی دور ز گفت و گوی مایی و تویی دور
309. [It was] the Beauty [that is] free from the fetter of manifestations;[116] By its own light, it was manifest to itself.	جمال مطلق از قید مظاهر به نور خویش هم بر خویش ظاهر

God was in a secluded place, or *khalvat*, alone by Godself prior to the existence of the world. Both authors describe God's essence as existing in a secluded place (khalvat), specifically in a "corner" (*kunj* or *gūshih*), at a place and time when and where the world did not exist. They both describe God's essence as *vujūd* or *vujūdī*, being or "a" being. And they use the word *naqsh*, or stain/mark, to refer to differentiation. They both say that in this moment, there was nothing other than God, there was no "mark" of others or otherness. This is the First Entification, as discussed above.

The Second Entification is the moment when God's essence "pitches" its tent in the world, as both authors describe it. Indeed, Jāmī refers to the second chapter of the *Lamaʿāt*, which begins with the account of Love acting like a sultan by pitching a tent and raising a flag,

[116] My translation of this line slightly modifies that of d'Hubert. See d'Hubert, "Foundational *Maḥabbat-nāma*s," 657. D'Hubert reads "jamāl-i muṭlaq az qayd-i maẓahir" as "a beauty free from the fetters of manifestations." I emphasize the definite article to suggest that this line is meant as a gloss on the previous one. Jāmī is defining God, the singular being of line 308, as also being the Beauty that exists prior to manifestation.

as the chapter on the Second Entification.[117] The Second Entification is the beginning of the process of the manifest world's coming into being, where God's essence can be perceived.

Though Jāmī reads ʿIrāqī's second chapter as describing the Second Entification, according to Akbarian theories of creation, ʿIrāqī's formulation is actually an abbreviated and allusive version of what other Akbarian thinkers describe in greater detail. According to other Akbarians, God's knowledge of God's names in the First Entification, also called the "Holiest Emanation," (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*) give rise to the Permanent Archetypes (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*, or, as Dagli calls them, "immutable identities").[118] Al-Qayṣarī defines these Permanent Archetypes as follows: "Know that the divine names possess intelligible forms (*ṣuwar maʿqūla*) in the divine knowledge, since He knows His Essence, names and attributes through Himself. Those forms of knowledge, given that are identical with the Essence, are theophanies of a special individuation (*taʿayyun*) and specific relation called Permanent Archetypes (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*)."[119] During the Second Entification, also called the Holy Emanation (*al-fayḍ al-muqaddas*), these Permanent Archetypes manifest themselves in the physical world.[120] As Dagli explains, "The second [entification], or Holy Emanation (*al-fayḍ al-muqaddas*) is the existentiation or externalization of

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[117] Jāmī, *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*, 79. Wilson and Chittick translate the title that Jāmī gives to the second chapter of ʿIrāqī's text as, " On the Perfection of Distinct-Manifestation, which is the Self-Revelation of God in the loci of theophany and manifestation and which arises from the Second Entification." Chittick and Wilson, *Divine Flashes*, 74.

[118] Chittick and Wilson, introduction to *Divine Flashes*, 10; Ali, *Philosophical Sufism*, 80; Dagli, *Ibn al-ʿArabī*, 62.

[119] Dāwūd ibn Muḥammad al-Qayṣarī, *The Horizons of Being: The Metaphysics of Ibn al-ʿArabī in the* Muqaddimat al-Qayṣarī, trans. Mukhtar H. Ali (Brill, 2020), 93.

[120] Ali, *Philosophical Sufism*, 80; Dagli, *Ibn al-ʿArabī*, 62.

these forms (the immutable identities [i.e., Permanent Archetypes]) into the world, thus making them *ʿayn mawjūdah* or *ʿayn khārijiyyah*."[121] Furthermore, Ali elaborates, "The Permanent Archetypes can be viewed as an isthmus between the divine names and the external entities.…The Permanent Archetypes possess receptivity from the divine names and the external entities possess receptivity from the Permanent Archetypes."[122]

Jāmī follows this Akbarian framework very closely in his commentary on the second chapter of ʿIrāqī's *Lamaʿāt* by "reading between the lines" of ʿIrāqī's text. For example, he interprets the word "world," *ʿālam*, in the phrase "scattered jewels upon the world" (*ganj bar ʿālam pāshīd*) from ʿIrāqī's opening line as referring to "the Permanent Archetypes of the World" (*aʿyān-i thābitih-i ʿālim*).[123] Furthermore, he interprets the "treasure" that is scattered upon the Permanent Archetypes as "the treasure of the essences [or jewels, *javāhir*] of the decrees and effects of the Names and Attributes" (*ganj-i javāhir-i aḥkām u āṯār-i asmāʾ u ṣifāt*).[124] These decrees and effects of the names and attributes are hidden, until after entification, when they become receptive to manifestation.[125] In other words, the Permanent Archetypes are the entities that allow God's Names and Attributes to Manifest in the physical world. Nowhere does ʿIrāqī use the technical term "Permanent Archetypes." However, by interpreting this

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[121] Dagli, *Ibn al-ʿArabī*, 62.

[122] Ali, *Philosophical Sufism*, 80–81.

[123] Jāmī, *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*, 80.

[124] Jāmī, *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*, 80.

[125] Jāmī, *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*, 79–80.

passage through an Akbarian lens, Jāmī allows ʿIrāqī's passage to serve as a shorthand, abbreviated account of the Second Entification. He then transposes ʿIrāqī's words into *bayt*s of his own *maṯnavī*. In doing so, Jāmī furnishes an account of creation that is plausibly, implicitly Akbarian, in the same way as ʿIrāqī's passage is.

The image of beauty showing its face in every mirror is also one that Jāmī might have taken from ʿIrāqī. For both authors, the image of the mirror represents the Akbarian concept of the "locus of manifestation," or *maẓhar*. For example, Jāmī's line 324 seems to be in dialogue with the opening of ʿIrāqī's fifth chapter, which reads, "The Beloved in the mirror, at every moment, shows a different face, and in every instant comes in a different form."[126] The title that Jāmī gives to ʿIrāqī's fifth chapter is, "On the diversity of the locus-of-manifestation (*maẓhar*) at every instant, and the disparity of the outward-manifestation of the Outward in keeping with the locus-of-manifestation's diversity."[127] Here, Jāmī is using the technical Akbarian term "locus-of-manifestation" as a synonym for "mirror." He and ʿIrāqī both use the latter term to refer to the sites where God's attributes become manifest. According to the thought of Ibn ʿArabī and many of his followers, every manifest entity in the visible, physical world is a manifestation of one or more of God's names or attributes. As Saʿdiyya Shaikh explains,

> Within this labyrinthine cosmic orchestra, divine attributes are scattered, dispersed, and concentrated in all created things. They change in intensity and gradation—here diffuse, there clustered. In shifting combinations and with abundant possibility, the divine names

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[126] ʿIraqī, *Lamaʿāt*, 62.

[127] Translated by Chittick and Wilson. ʿIraqī, *Divine Flashes*, 81.

> collectively form a hierarchy that is the cosmos. Every divine attribute finds loci of manifestation in the cosmos.[128]

The manifestation of the names and attributes of God is facilitated by the Permanent Archetypes, as discussed above. Out of all of God's creation, it is only the human being that is the locus of manifestation of all of God's names and attributes.[129] As al-Qayṣarī writes, "Each category of name demands a locus of manifestation through which its properties are manifested; these are the entities. If they are capable of manifesting the properties of every name, [they are like] the human being."[130]

To summarize, God's essence (Beauty, for Jāmī) is initially only manifest to Godself. In this stage of manifestation, called the First Entification, God is the sole object of God's knowledge. God's self-knowledge entails God's knowledge of God's own names and attributes (*asmāʾ wa-ṣifāt*). God's knowledge of God's own names gives rise to the Permanent Archetypes (what Dagli calls "immutable entities"). These Permanent Archetypes allow the divine names to become manifest in the multiplicity of the forms of the world as it is before our eyes. Each entity in the world is a "locus of manifestation" for one or more divine names. The human being is privileged in comparison to the rest of God's creation because only human beings are capable of manifesting every one of God's divine names.

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[128] Saʿdiyya Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy: Ibn ʿArabī, Gender, and Sexuality* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 71.

[129] Ali, *Philosophical Sufism*, 59.

[130] Al-Qayṣarī, *The Horizons of Being*, trans. Ali, 81.

1.2.3. The manifestation of this beauty in the world gives rise to lovers and beloveds. When a human loves another human being, the real object of their love is God's beauty. However, the human form both reflects and obscures God's beauty, because lovers fail to recognize the divine meaning contained in the outward form

Once the world has come to exist in the form that we know it—due to the Permanent Archetypes allowing for the manifestation of God's names and attributes—love arises among the beings of the world. Jāmī illustrates this point by explaining how all beings become enthralled by Beauty's self-manifestation in the world, and that this gives rise to the archetypal lover-beloved pairs of nightingale-rose and moth-flame. He writes,[131]

325. From it [Beauty], a single ray of light flashed upon kingdom and angel [alike]; The angel found themself spinning like the heavens.	ازو یک لمعه بر مُلک و مَلَک تافت مَلَک سرگشته خود را چون فلک یافت
…	…
328. From that ray, a light fell upon the rose; On account of the rose, frenzy fell upon the nightingale's soul.	ازان لمعه فروغی بر گل افتاد ز گل شوری به جان بلبل افتاد
329. The candle lit a fire from its [Beauty's] own face; In every place, it burned a hundred moths.	رخ خود شمع ازان آتش برافروخت به هر کاشانه صد پروانه را سوخت
330. From its [Beauty's] light, a ray shone upon the sun; The water-lily raised its head from the water.	ز نورش تافت بر خورشید یک تاب برون آورد نیلوفر سر از آب

All of these lines communicate the idea that the various entities of the world all partially manifest God's essence, or Beauty. The beauty that the forms of the world possess on account of God's beauty inspires love in their beholders. The nightingale falls in love with the rose because

[131] Jāmī, *YZ*, 35.

a part of God's Beauty is visible in it, in the same way that moths are drawn to the candle and the water-lily is drawn to the sun.

Immediately following these lines, Jāmī describes how human beloveds, like the rose, candle, and sun, also have a share of God's Beauty, and that this inspires love in human lovers. Jāmī notes:[132]

331. From its [i.e., Beauty's] face, Laylī adorned her own face; From Majnūn arose desire for each of her hairs	ز رویش روی خویش آراست لیلی به هر مویش ز مجنون خاست میلی
332. Shīrīn's lip opened, spilling sugar— It stole Parvīz's heart and Farhād's life.	لب شیرین به شکّر ریز بگشاد دل از پرویز برد و جان از فرهاد
333. The Moon of Canaan [i.e., Yūsuf's] head emerged from his collar— It brought to Zulaykhā the destruction of her soul	سر از جیب مه کنعان برآورد زلیخا را دمار از جان برآورد
334. It is God's [lit. "His"] beauty that has given luster to every place. By way of earthly beloveds, it has the closed veil.	جمال اوست هر جا جلوه کرده ز معشوقان عالم بسته پرده
335. In every veil where you would see something concealed, that is God The one who instigates every command of heart-stealing is God.	به هر پرده که بینی پردگی اوست قضا جنبان هر دل‌بردگی اوست

These lines by Jāmī seem to draw from a passage from the seventh chapter of ʿIrāqī's *Lamaʿāt*, in which ʿIrāqī explains that famous beloveds like Laylī are only loved on account of the beauty they borrow from God. ʿIrāqī writes,

> غیر او را نشاید که دوست دارند بلکه محال است زیرا که هر چه را دوست دارند بعد از محبت ذاتی که موجبش معلوم نبود یا بهر حسن باشد یا بهر احسان و این هر دو غیر او را نیست...الا آنست که پس پردهٔ اسباب و چهرهٔ احباب محتجب است نظر مجنون هر چند بر جمال لیلی است اما لیلی آینه‌ای بیش نیست

[132] Jāmī, *YZ*, 35–36 (lines 331–335).

> Anyone other than God is not worthy of being loved; indeed, this is impossible. This is because everything that is loved—besides the Love pertaining to the Essence, the cause of which is unknown—is [loved] either for its beauty (*ḥusn*) or for its goodness (*iḥsān*). And both of these do not exist, except for what belongs to God. Indeed, it is that [beauty and goodness] which is concealed behind the veil of causes and the face of beloveds. Majnūn's gaze is always upon Layli's beauty, but Layli is nothing more than a mirror.[133]

Using this passage as an intertext informs the way I read Jāmī's line 331. Though one could argue that the line means that Laylī is borrowing her beauty from Majnūn's face,[134] I suggest that Jāmī here is echoing ʿIrāqī's point that Laylī's beauty, which causes Majnūn to love her, is not her own but belongs instead to God. Commenting on the final line of the passage above, Jāmī writes that the reason why Laylī is no more than a mirror is "that the reflection of the Absolute Beauty appears in her" (*keh ʿaks-i jamāl-i muṭlaq dar ān namūdih*).[135] Here Jāmī uses the same term, *jamāl-i muṭlaq*, that he uses to refer to God's non-manifest, absolute beauty in line 309, above: "the Beauty free from the fetters of manifestation." Jāmī's point is that all beauty that one witnesses in the world is really a manifestation of God's beauty, which is inherent in God's essence.

The concept of human beauties as "veils" in addition to mirrors is another concept that Jāmī and ʿIrāqī share. Though human beauties reflect God's beauty in the way that a mirror does, they also serve as veils because they obscure the divine origins of their beauty. For Akbarian

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[133] ʿIraqī, *Lamaʿāt*, 69–70.

[134] This is certainly a viable way to read this line. Indeed, in his commentary on this passage, Jamī writes that loving without knowing its cause "is the effect of the affinity between the essence of the beloved and lover" (*aṯar-i munāsabat bāshad miyān-i zāt-i maḥbūb u muḥibb*). Jāmī, *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*, 112.

[135] Jāmī, *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*, 112.

thinkers, God's manifestation is necessarily a form of veiling. As ʿIrāqī writes in the thirteenth chapter of his *Lamaʿāt*, "Thus, God's Names and Attributes have come to be God's veils."[136] ʿIraqī soon follows this line with a *qiṭʿih* that begins with the following line:[137]

The veil of your face is also your face, in every instance. You are hidden from the whole world, insofar as you are manifest.	حجاب بوی تو هم روی تو است در همه حال نهانی از همه عالم ز بس که پیدائی

This line by ʿIrāqī elaborates on two verses by al-Jandī in Arabic that ʿIrāqī quotes in his third chapter, which compares God's essence to the Ocean and manifest entities to waves:

The Ocean is the Ocean, as it was in Pre-Eternity; What is temporally created are waves and rivers.	البحر البحر على ما كان في القدم إن الحوادث أمواج و أنهار
Do not let their various forms veil you From what takes form in them, for they are veils.[138]	لا تحجبنك أشكال تشاكلها عمن تشكل فيها فهي أستار

In his commentary on these lines, Jāmī writes that the "Ocean" refers to "singular Being after its manifestation in divine and cosmic entifications," and that its state in pre-eternity was a state of "true oneness."[139] However, the waves and rivers are the multiple manifestations of this divine oneness; though they are many, the essence that underlies them is singular.[140] They are veils

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[136] ʿIrāqī, *Lamaʿāt*, 87.

[137] ʿIrāqī, *Lamaʿāt*, 88.

[138] ʿIrāqī, *Lamaʿāt*, 57. Chittick and Wilson have identified these lines as al-Jandī's. See ʿIrāqī, *Divine Flashes*, 78.

[139] Jāmī, *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*, 89.

[140] Jāmī, *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*, 89.

because they conceal "the unity of Singular Being" that is veiled in them."[141] In other words, the various forms of the world, including human beloveds, in their multiplicity of forms, hide the fact that they are all manifestations of a singular Divine essence. This is precisely the problem that human lovers face. For this reason, Jāmī writes that the true object of human love is actually God, even though one may not recognize God as this ultimate object:

337. The heart that loves desirable beauties— Whether it knows it or not—loves God.[142]	دلی کو عاشق خوبان دلجوست اگر داند و گر نی عاشق اوست

Theoretically, the goal of the journey of love is to remove these veils to perceive the essence that underlies them. As Jāmī writes in the title he gives to the thirteenth ʿIrāqī's *Lamaʿāt*, these veils necessitate the journey of love, and the journey consists in removing these veils.[143] As I will discuss below, in the following two chapters of the *masnavī*, Jāmī admonishes lovers to be wary of the veil of human beauty and to recognize the "meaning" that the beautiful human form both conveys and conceals: the divine origin of its beauty and therefore God's status as the only worth object of love.

At the end of the chapter, Jāmī explains that love, in addition to beauty, ultimately comes from God. This had already been expressed by Jāmī, both in his title to chapter 10 and in his description of God's essence being its own lover and beloved in the condition of the First

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[141] Jāmī, *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*, 89.

[142] Jāmī, *YZ*, 36 (line 337).

[143] Jāmī, *Ashiʿʿat al-Lamaʿāt*, 143.

Entification. In the following lines, Jāmī extends these ideas to the phenomenon of human love, writing,

338. Be careful lest you suddenly utter an error, Saying, "From us is lover-ness, from [God] is beauty."	هلا تا نغلطی ناگه نگویی که از ما عاشقی وز وی نکویی
339. Because since you are beautiful and praised in love, What first rose up from [God] has appeared in you.	گه همچون نکویی عشق ستوده ازو سر بر زده در تو نموده
340. You are the mirror, [God] is the mirror-adorner; You are hidden, and [God] is manifest.	تویی آیینه او آیینه آرا تویی پوشیده و او آشکارا
341. Whenever you see something beautiful, the mirror is also [God]; [God] is not only the treasure—the treasury is also God.	چو نیکو بنگری آیینه هم اوست نه تنها گنج او گنجینه هم اوست

In these lines, Jāmī reiterates and expands on points that he has already made throughout this chapter. God is (manifest in) all entities in the visible world. Indeed, nothing exists other than God. This is the central point of the Akbarian framework that Jāmī has been relying on throughout this chapter. Therefore, it makes no sense to create a conceptual division between humans and God as "subject" and "object" of love, respectively. This is what I take to the meaning of lines 338 and 339: Humans' love for other humans is essentially God's self-love. This is because love (for God) first arose in God, and God is the only true object of love. Though Jāmī describes human beings as the mirror of God's beauty and God as the fashioner of this mirror, he immediately obliterates this distinction by calling God the mirror, too. Both lover and beloved are (manifestations of) God. I will return to this point in the conclusion of my dissertation. For our present purposes, it is worth noting that, in concluding chapter 10, Jāmī returns to the place from where he started. Nothing exists other than God. The world contains multiple visible forms, but these are all partial manifestations of God's essence. Thus, all love in the world is, essentially, God's love for Godself.

1.3. Chapters 11 and 12 of *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*: How a Lover Should Be

The eleventh and twelfth chapters of the *masnavī* build on the theory outlined in the tenth chapter. In these two, shorter chapters, Jāmī speaks in general terms about how one should be a lover in the world. In light of the fact that all visible forms of the world are manifestations of God's attributes, he argues that visible forms are necessary for the experience of love, writing,

357. In this world, even if you try a hundred things, Only love gives you freedom from yourself.	به گیتی گر چه صد کار آزمایی همین عشقت دهد از خود رهایی
358. Do not turn from love. Go, though you yourself are metaphorical; Because for the sake of the truth, that is skillful.	متاب از عشق رو گر خود مجازیست که آن بهر حقیقی کارسازیست
359. As long as you have not read "ABC" on the first tablet, How would you be able to study the Qurʾān?	به لوح اول «الف بی» تا نخوانی ز قرآن درس خواندن کی توانی
360. I heard that a pupil went before a master Who was leading him on his path.	شنیدم شد مریدی پیش پیری که باشد در سلوکش دستگیری
361. He said, "If you have not set foot in your love, Go, become a lover. At that time, come before me.	بگفت ار پا نشد در عشقت از جای برو عاشق شو آنگه پیش ما آی
362. "Because without drinking the wine of form, You would not come to taste the dregs of meaning.	که بی جام می صورت کشیدن نیاری جرعهٔ معنی چشیدن
363. "However, it is necessary not to stay within form, But rather to quickly carry oneself over this bridge."	ولی باید که در صورت نمانی وز این پل زود خود را بگذرانی

One might be tempted to read these lines as an encapsulation of the "message," so to speak, of the entire story. Indeed, those scholars who read Zulaykhā's trajectory in the *masnavī* as representing a journey from embodied love to spiritual, divine love could point to these lines as supporting evidence. According to such a reading, loving beautiful forms is necessary, but it is not the end goal.

However, this should not be taken to discount the role of the "metaphorical" bodies of the lover and beloved as tools by which one can arrive at the destination of loving God, the source of love and beauty. One can read these lines by Jāmī alongside Matthew Thomas Miller's understanding of the common medieval Sufi adage, "The metaphorical is a bridge to the real" (*al-majāz qanṭarat al-ḥaqīqa*), to which lines 358 and 363 allude. He writes that the exhortation to rush across this bridge, made not only by Jāmī but by figures before him such as Rūmī, "should not be interpreted as license to disregard the embodied bridge to divine love or its physical form."[144] In order to re-center the significance of the body of the beloved as a pedagogical tool for training the Sufi to love God, especially in the context of the ritual practice of *shāhid-bāzī*—gazing at beautiful beardless boys as signs of God's beauty—Miller opts for "embodied" as a more suitable translation for *majāzī* than metaphorical.[145] (I have retained "metaphorical" as a gloss for *majāzī* in my translation of line 358 because I want to emphasize that the visible forms of the world "symbolize" God in ways that require interpretation on the part of the one who beholds these forms, just as a literary metaphor can involve an object symbolize an unlike object in a way that needs to be interpreted. I will return to this point in my discussion of dreams, below.) Jāmī was himself a defender of the practice of *shāhid-bāzī*. For example, in his hagiographical work, *Nafaḥāt al-Uns*, for his entry on the Sufi figure Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī (d. 1238 CE), who was controversial for practicing *shāhid-bāzī*, Jāmī quotes the following quatrain by Kirmānī, which resembles the above lines from *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*:

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[144] Matthew Thomas Miller, "Embodying the Beloved: Embodiment, (Homo)eroticism, and the Straightening of Desire in the Hagiographic Tradition of Fakhr al-Dīn ʿIrāqī," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 21, no. 1 (2018): 7, https://doi.org/10.1080/1475262X.2018.1492134.

[145] Miller, "Embodying the Beloved," 9.

With the eyes of the head we witness forms
Because the trace of [any] meaning [must] appear in a form.
This world is a form and we [have the shape] of figures
One can only see the meaning [behind the figures] through the form[146]

Jāmī's defense of the practice of *shāhid-bāzī* can be interpreted as being consistent with his agreement with ʿIrāqī's views, and more generally with the Akbarian concept, of the world and the forms within it as sites of God's manifestation. For example, ʿIrāqī provides a quatrain in chapter eight of his *Lamaʿāt* that reads,

I have a beloved whose form is body and soul.	یاری دارم که جسم و جان صورت اوست
What body and what soul? The entirety of the world is God's form.	چه جسم و چه جان جمله جهان صورت اوست
Every beautiful form and and pure meaning	هر صورت خوب و معنی پاکیزه
That comes before my gaze is God's form.[147]	کاندر نظر من آید صورت اوست

However, in his insistence on the necessity of loving forms as a stepping-stone to loving God, Jāmī departs from ʿIrāqī, who seems to imply that God can reveal Godself directly through meaning without the intermediary of form, or perhaps beyond both form and meaning. Indeed, in the above quatrain, ʿIrāqī seems to conceive of meaning, *maʿnī* as a type of form—a sensible object of perception or intellection that, like traditional "forms," veils God's essence. He writes at the beginning of the eighth chapter of his *Lamaʿāt*:

محبوب یا در آینهٔ صورت روی نماید یا در آینهٔ معنی یا ورای صورت او معنی

[146] Lloyd Ridgeon, *Awḥad al- Dīn Kirmānī and the Controversy of the Sufi Gaze* (Routledge, 2018), 72. Brackets in original.

[147] ʿIrāqī, *Lamaʿāt*, 73–74. Cf. ʿIrāqī, *Divine Flashes*, 88.

> The Beloved shows their face either in the mirror of form, or in the mirror of meaning, or beyond form and meaning.[148]

Furthermore, as I will show in greater detail below, even though ʿIrāqī acknowledges the utility of forms, he insists that forms must ultimately be abandoned. For example, he writes in a quatrain at the end of the ninth chapter of the *Lamaʿāt*,

In the tightness of form, how can meaning fit?	در تنگنای صورت معنی چگونه گنجد
In the cell of the mendicants, what business does the sultan have?	در کلبه گدایان سلطان چه کار دارد
What does the form-worshipper ignorant of meaning know, in the end?	صورت پرست غافل معنی چه داند آخر
Say, "What business do they have with the beauty of the hidden Beloved?[149]	گو با جمال جانان پنهان چه کار دارد

While line 363 by Jāmī, above, seems to agree with the sentiment that ʿIrāqī expresses here, I argue that Zulaykhā's actual trajectory in this story departs from, and complicates, the theoretical insistence on abandoning forms as objects of love in order to love God, whose beauty is reflected and manifest in all visible forms.

What exactly is the meaning (maʿnī) conveyed by the form of the beloved? I suggest that this meaning is essentially the key point that Jāmī explains in chapter 10 of *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*. The entire world, including the form of the beloved, is a manifestation of God. The world is not other than God's self-disclosure. This point, that the meaning of a visible form is simply the fact

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[148] ʿIrāqī, *Lamaʿāt*, 73. Cf. ʿIrāqī, *Divine Flashes*, 87.

[149] ʿIrāqī, *Lamaʿāt*, 77. Cf. ʿIrāqī, *Divine Flashes*, 90–91.

of it being an instance of God's self-manifestation, is found in ʿIrāqī's *Lamaʿāt*. At the very end of his text, ʿIrāqī writes,

معلوم کند که کل شیئی هالک الا وجهه چه وجه دارد چرا نشاید که هاء وجهه عاید شیئی باشد چه هر شیئی از روی صورت هالک است و از روی معنی باقی چه از وجه معنی آن وجه ظهور حق است که ویبقی وجه ربک ای دوست چون دانستی که معنی و حقیقت اشیاء وجه اوست پس ارنا الاشیاء کما هی می‌گوی

> [The lover] would know [regarding] "Each thing perishes except its face," (Q 28:88) what possesses the face. Why would it be unsuitable for the "its" of "its face" to relate to "thing"? Because each thing, with respect to its form, is perishing, but with respect to its meaning, it remains. Because regarding "face," the meaning of that is the manifestation of God-the-Truth, i.e., "and the face of your Lord remains." Oh friend, if you knew that the meaning and truth of things is [God's] face, you would say, "Show us things as they are."[150]

In this passage, ʿIrāqī departs from the traditional interpretation of Q 28:88, which is typically interpreted to mean "everything perishes except God's face," as instead meaning that the face of everything does not perish. However, he goes a step further to interpret this "face" as the "meaning" of each thing, which is none other than God's self-manifestation or God's face. The meaning of all visible forms is none other than the fact of their being manifestations of God.

1.4. Bāzighih's Story as the Model from which Zulaykhā's Story Departs

I have shown that Jāmī, in chapters 10–12 of *Yūsuf ū Zulaykhā*, outlines a model of love, drawn largely from Ibn ʿArabī and ʿIrāqī, according to which God manifests God's own beauty as the world, which inspires love. Jāmī admonishes the seeker after truth to tread the path of love but to cross over from form to meaning so as not to be ensnared by the world of form. He illustrates this trajectory via the story of Bāzighih, whose encounter with Yūsuf serves as an

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[150] ʿIrāqī, *Lamaʿāt*, 133–134. Cf. ʿIrāqī, *Divine Flashes*, 126.

interlude that interrupts the plot. I suggest that Bāzighih serves as a foil for Zulaykhā, taking the path that she does not tread.

Jāmī introduces the story of Bāzighih at a crucial point in the plot: immediately after Zulaykhā has convinced her husband, the ʿazīz (i.e,. vizier) of Egypt, to acquire Yūsuf for purchase in the slave market. Prior to this moment, Yūsuf had no knowledge of Zulaykhā, and Zulaykhā had only encountered Yūsuf as an image in her dreams. Jāmī's placement of Bāzighih's story at this moment—as a flashback that interrupts the narrative—seems to set it up as a model for Zulaykhā. Now that Zulaykhā is in physical contact with Yūsuf, the question becomes whether or not she will follow that same path of love as Bāzighih.

Bāzighih's entire character arc is confined to a single chapter spanning 90 lines (lines 1686–1775). The title of the chapter already signals the story's function as allegorizing the path from *majāzī* love to *ḥaqīqī* love:

داستان دختر بازغه نام از نسل عاد که به مال و جمال نظیر خود نداشت و غایبانه عاشق جمال یوسف شد و در آن آیینه جمال حقیقت دید و از مجاز به حقیقت رسید
The Story of the Girl Named Bāzighih, of the Lineage of ʿĀd, Who Was Peerless in Property and Beauty, and Secretly Became the Lover of Yūsuf's Beauty, and In that Mirror Saw the Beauty of the Real, and from the Embodied Arrived at the Real

Jāmī writes at the very beginning of this story/chapter:

1686. Love does not only arise through sight; Much of this good fortune [of love] arises from speech.	نه تنها عشق از دیدار خیزد بسا کین دولت از گفتار خیزد
1687. The ray of beauty enters by way of the ear. It robs the soul of rest and the heart of consciousness.	در آید جلوهٔ حسن از ره گوش ز جان آرام برباید ز دل هوش

Line 1687 is particularly notable for its synesthesia; Jāmī seems to be aware of vision as the dominant sense by which beauty is perceived through his image of the "light ray." However, he takes great pains to insist on the human voice and speech as transmitters of love. Indeed, in his description of Bāzighih's beauty (lines 1690–1701), Jāmī emphasizes the beauty of her smiling mouth and the sweetness that it spreads, which I take to mean her sweet-sounding voice. This emphasizes that the sound of one's voice, and the speech that it enunciates, can contain and exhibit beauty. Jāmī then narrates how Bāzighih heard of Yūsuf's beauty:

1702. When she heard report of Yūsuf and his characteristics, Her affection stirred at the moon of his face.	حدیث یوسف و وصفش چو شنید به ماه روی مهرش بجنبید
1703. When talk of that became incessant, That idea became fixed in her heart.	چو شد گفت و شنید آن پیاپی شد آن اندیشه محکم در دل وی
1704. She inclined to seeing from hearing; Indeed, hearing is the seed of seeing.	به دیدن میلش افتاد از شنیدن بلی باشد شنیدن تخم دیدن

Bāzighih acts on this inclination by seeking him out, coming to Egypt and finally beholding his beautiful form:

1712. She saw a beauty beyond the limits of perception, Like the soul clear of the pollution of water and clay	جمالی دید بیش از حد ادراک چو جان زآلودگی آب و گل پاک
1713. His likeness had never been seen in the world; No one had ever heard anything about someone similar to him.	به گیتی مثل او نادیده هرگز ز کس مانند او نشنیده هرگز
1714. First, from him, she lost herself. From tasting this loss of self, she became free of herself.	نخست از دیدن او بیخود افتاد ز ذوق بیخودی گشت از خود آزاد

1715. And after that unconsciousness, she brought forth awareness From the sleep of her ignorance, she brought forth wakefulness.	وزآن پس بیهوشی هوشیاری آورد ز خواب غفلتش بیداری آورد

Bāzighih's movement from the bodily to the spiritual happens immediately. She confronts Yūsuf face-to-face and asks him about the source of his otherworldly beauty. To this, he replies that his beauty comes from God:

1729. He said, "I am the craftwork of that Maker From whose ocean one drop satisfies me."	بگفتا صنعت آن صانعم من که از بحرش به رشحی قانعم من
1730. "The firmament is one point from the pen of His completeness; The world is one rosebud from the garden of His beauty."	فلک یک نقطه از کلک کمالش جهان یک غنچه از باغ جمالش

Yūsuf continues by reiterating the message of line 1730, that the world is created by God and partially manifests God's attributes, like beauty and completeness, without fully comprehending or encompassing them. He then explains that the visible world manifests God's attributes by way of reflection, as a mirror does:

1733. "He made mirrors of the atoms of the world; He cast a reflection of his own face in each one."	ز ذرّات جهان آیینه‌ها ساخت ز روی خود به هر یک عکسی انداخت
1734. "Everything that is beautiful to your sharp eye, When you find it beautiful, that is the reflection of His face."	به چشم تیز بینت هر چه نکوست چو نیکو بنگری عکس رخ اوست
1735. "If you see the reflection, rush to the origin, Because the image has no light/strength in face of the origin."	چو دیدی عکس سوی اصل بشتاب که پیش اصل نبود عکس را تاب

1736. “God forbid that you remain far from the origin; When the image is finished, you would remain without light.”	معاذ الله ز اصل ار دور مانی چو عکس آخر شود بی‌نور مانی
1737. “The image does not have such permanence; The color of the rose does not have such faithfulness.”	نباشد عکس را چندان بقایی ندارد رنگ گل را چندان وفایی
1738. “You seek permanence; look toward the origin. You search for faithfulness; look in the direction of the origin.”	بقا خواهی به روی اصل بنگر وفا جویی به سوی اصل بنگر
1739. “Longing for an object lacerates the vein of life; Because sometimes, it is there, and sometimes, it is not.”	غم چیزی رگ جان را خراشد که گاهی باشد و گاهی نباشد

Yūsuf’s point is that the physical, visible forms of the world, including himself, are impermanent. This statement calls to mind Qurʾān “Each thing perishes except its face” (Q 28:88), which, as discussed above, ʿIrāqī uses as the basis for his argument that God is the only proper object of love. Yūsuf, like ʿIrāqī, argues that the transience of forms means that only the divine source behind forms deserves adoration. However, his statement also foreshadows the particular trajectory of Zulaykhā’s love. When Yūsuf’s bodily form inevitably perishes, Zulaykhā, blinding herself, does “remain without light,” as line 1736, above states.

Bāzighih’s reply to Yūsuf clearly marks her difference from Zulaykhā because, unlike her, Bāzighih insists that loving God requires abandoning her love for Yūsuf. She explains,

1746. You have lifted the veil from the face of my hope; From the atom, you have shown me the path to the sun	حجاب از روی امّیدم گشودی ز ذرّه ره به خورشیدم نمودی
1747. Now for me, the door of this secret is open: Practicing love with you is metaphorical.	کنون بر من در این راز باز است که با تو عشق ورزیدن مجاز است

1748. Now that my eye is open to the truth, It is better for me to leave this melancholy over what is metaphorical.	چو باشد بر حقیقت چشم بازم به افتد ترک سودای مجازم
1749. May God reward you for opening my eyes You have made me an intimate of the soul of souls	جزاک الله که چشمم باز کردی مرا با جان جان همراز کردی
1750. You detached my heart from loving anything else. You made the sanctuary of union my station.	ز مهر غیر بگسستی دل من حریم وصل کردی منزل من

In these lines, Bāzighih reiterates the classical Sufi paradigm that the *majāzī* is a bridge that one must cross to reach the *ḥaqīqī*. She describes herself as a wayfarer on the Sufi path, describing her *manzil*, station, as the one of union with God. She makes it clear that now that she is aware of God as the source of Yūsuf's beauty, she must no longer love Yūsuf and can only love God.

As will be shown, Bāzighih makes an almost perfect foil for Zulaykhā. Bāzighih, like Zulaykhā, is peerless in beauty, has access to incomparable wealth, and comes from an exalted lineage. Zulaykhā's taking of a different path from Bāzighih, I argue, is consistent with Jāmī's theory of creation while revealing a tension within the theory between God's transcendence and God's immanence.

Chapter 2: Zulaykhā as Lover: Standing on the "Bridge to the Real"

2.1. Chapter Introduction

In this chapter, I will analyze Zulaykhā's actions in her role as Yūsuf's lover. As already discussed, recent scholarship has argued that Zulaykhā's development as a character entail somehow redirecting or sublimating her embodied, sensual, romantic love for Yūsuf into a love for God. As I hope to show in this chapter, this reading of her character arc is inadequate for several reasons.

Firstly, Zulaykhā, from the very moment she falls in love with Yūsuf, is aware of God as the creator of Yūsuf's beauty. She never forgets that Yūsuf's beauty is a sign of God. This is not a lesson that she must learn, unlike Bāzighih. The latter is taught by Yūsuf to recognize God as the creator of his beauty and, therefore, the only worthy object of their adoration. Zulaykhā, instead, already recognizes this fact.

Secondly, the action that she performs to finally attain romantic union Yūsuf—smashing the idol she worships—is heavily qualified by Jāmī. He narrates the event as though Zulaykhā had never really been in error to worship the idol, as the idol itself is God's creation. Furthermore, Zulaykhā's adoration of the idol, like all idolatry, is described as resulting ultimately from God's will. This frees Zulaykhā from blame for her false worship. The logic of Zulaykhā's idolatry can be applied to her love for Yūsuf as well. If Yūsuf, like the idol, is God's creation, then loving Yūsuf was always already loving God.

Lastly, Zulaykhā chooses to kill herself rather than live on after Yūsuf dies. This scene is not narrated as a literalization of the Sufi ideal of dying to the world (i.e., *fanā'*) to return to God. Instead, Zulaykhā is praised for her absolute fidelity to her beloved, choosing to give up life in the world to be with him. Her fidelity to him on his deathbed parallels her faithfulness to him

when he was in prison. During that time, Zulaykhā also engages in acts of self-harm and self-mortification. This communicates that for her, absence from Yūsuf is equivalent to death; her life has no purpose without union with him. In drawing this parallel, I show that, like her recognition of God as the creator of Yūsuf's beauty, her inability to live without him is a constant feature of her characterization throughout the poem's plot.

Given these consistencies in her character throughout the story, including before and after her union with Yūsuf, one might ask whether or not Zulaykhā undergoes any real changes in her character at all. Jāmī seems to say, in fact, that Zulaykhā has always been the best of all lovers, from the moment that she is born until the moment she dies. What does she learn, if she learns anything? I am not convinced that she learns to redirect her love for Yūsuf to loving God. If she undergoes any suggestion, I suggest that it is her transformation *into Yūsuf*. In other words, she loses a sense of herself as an independent person apart from him; she comes to see his person coextensive with hers. In this way, she does undergo a loss of self. This can be understood, perhaps as a model for the Sufi's loss of self in loving God. Jāmī's Zulaykhā, then, seems to resemble the Zulaykhā of the Sufi thinkers before him. Modern commentators, however, have misunderstood Jāmī in reading Zulaykhā as transferring her love from Yūsuf to God. Rather, her utter devotion to her human beloved is a model for how the believer is to be devoted to God.

2.2. Knowing the Meaning behind Yūsuf's Form

From the very moment when Zulaykhā falls in love with Yūsuf—when she dreams of him—she seems to be aware of God as the source of his beauty. In other words, she is aware of the "meaning" (*maʿnā*) contained within, and communicated by, his outward form (*ṣūra*). While some lines by Jāmī seem to indicate otherwise, a closer reading reveals that Zulaykhā is not unaware of Yūsuf's divine origin.

The capacity of a beautiful human form to mislead the lover away from loving God as the meaning behind the form—a theme discussed in the preceding dissertation chapter, in which I examined the prologue chapters of Yūsuf and Zulaykhā—is foregrounded by Jāmī in his account of Zulaykhā's first dream. After an extended description of Yūsuf's beauty, Jāmī writes,

635. In the name of God, what a beautiful form he was! Because the form diminished, and inside, the meaning increased.	بنامیزد چه زیبا صورتی بود که صورت کاست و اندر معنی افزود
636. Zulaykhā was terrified by Zulaykhā-ness; She rested in the meaning of that form.	زلیخا از زلیخایی رمیده ازان صورت به معنی رمیده
637. If she were aware of that meaning, She would have been one of those who arrive on the path.	ازان معنی اگر آگاه بودی یکی از واصلان راه بودی
638. However, because she was a captive to the form, She did not become, at the start, aware of the meaning.	ولی چون بود در صورت گرفتار نشد در اول از معنی خبردار
639. We have all stayed in the bonds of fancy; We have all stayed captive to forms.	همه در بند پنداریم مانده به صورتها گرفتاریم مانده
640. If no meaning shows its face from form, Then how can one heart incline toward form?	ز صورت گر نه معنی رو نماید کجا یک دل سوی صورت گراید
641. The thirsty knows it to be certain that there is moisture in the vessel; For this reason, he brings his hand to its neck.	یقین داند که در کوزه نمی هست ازان در کردن آرد تشنه‌اش دست
642. When the clear ocean drowns him, The one who has seen this moisture no longer remembers his earthen vessel	چو سازد غرقه دریای زلالش نیاید یاد نم دیده سفالش

Jāmī, at first, seems to be saying that Zulaykhā was unaware of Yūsuf's divine origin (i.e., the meaning behind his beautiful form). However, this passage taken as a whole—the laste lines of the chapter in which she first dreams of him—seems to actually acknowledge that she would have had some inkling of this divine meaning. For example, in line 636, he writes that she flees

from her sense of self, in terror, and takes refuge in the meaning that his form contains. Indeed, Yūsuf's form is only a partial veil; its meaning is, so to speak, peeking out from under it (line 635). Furthermore, in lines 640 and 641, Jāmī seems to contradict, or at least complicate, the notion that Zulaykhā was totally unaware of the meaning that Yūsuf's form conveys (line 637). He notes that a thirsty person has certain knowledge that a water vessel contains water when they reach for it (line 641). In the same way, Zulaykhā's heart inclines toward Yūsuf, because it knows (for certain?) his divine origin (line 640). However, Jāmī nonetheless states that, in general, such a thirsty person would forget all about this water vessel once they become drowned in the sea (line 642). In this line, the sea is a metaphor for God, and the water jug is a metaphor for the human beloved. However, as I will show in the remainder of this chapter, Zulaykhā never becomes fully immersed in the sea.

Even if one reads this passage to mean that Zulaykhā has no awareness of the meaning behind Yūsuf's beautiful form when she dreams of him for the first time, she seems to very quickly acquire this awareness. In fact, this happens as soon as the second time she dreams of him. After a year spent agonizing over her memory of Yūsuf (line 772), she finally sees him again (lines 783–786). When she does so, she addresses his image, evoking God as his creator and the originator of her love for him. Jāmī writes,

787. She kissed the ground, saying, "Oh slender cypress, That stole both patience and ease from my heart,	زمین بوسید که ای سرو گل اندام که هم صبر ز دل بردی هم آرام
788. "In the name of that Creator who created you from light; Created you free of all pollution;	به آن صانع که از نور آفریدت ز هر آلایشی دور آفریدت
789. "Gave you chieftaincy of the army of the beautiful; Gave you grace greater than the water of life;	تو را بر خیل خوبان سروری داد به لطف از آب حیوان برتری داد

790. “Made your stature the rosebush of the garden of the soul; Made your lip the the source of the soul’s nourishment;	قدت را گلبن بستان جان ساخت لبت را مایهٔ قوت روان ساخت
791. “From your heart-cheering face, lit a candle That, like a moth, burned the bird of my soul;	ز روی دلفروزت شمعی افروخت که چون پروانه مرغ جان من سوخت
792. “From [your] musky locks, gave you a belt, Each hair of which binds me;	ز مشکین گیسوان دادت کمندی که بر من زو به هر مویيست بندی
793. “From your waist, turned my body [small] like a mouth; [Made] my heart tight like the *mīm*-shape of your mouth–	تنم را ساخت چو موی از میانت دلم را تنگ چو میم دهانت
794. “Grant mercy upon my heartless soul, Open your sweet-raining ruby [lip] in reply:	که بر جان من بیدل ببخشای به پاسخ لعل شکر بار بگشای
795. “Tell me, with such beauty and ability to ravish hearts, Who are you, and which household are you from?	بگو با این جمال و دلستانی کیی تو وز کدامین خاندانی
796. “You are a shining jewel—what is your quarry? You are an honorable king—what is your palace?”	درخشان گوهری کانت کدام است گرامی شاهی ایوانت کدام است

The image of Yūsuf that Zulaykhā sees in her dream then proceeds to reply to her. However, in his reply, he does not answer her question. Instead, he tells her that if she loves him, she should remain faithful to him by staying chaste until the two are united (lines 797–801). Indeed, he tells her that he is also already in love with her:

802. “My heart is already bound by your snare; I bear the mark of the brand of my love for you”	مرا هم دل به دام توست در بند ز داغ عشق تو هستم نشانمند

I will return to this statement in the following chapter, in which I analyze Yūsuf’s role as Zulaykhā’s lover. For now, the significance of his reply is that it causes her to ask him (or his dream-image) the same question when she sees him next. In her third dream encounter with Yūsuf, Zulaykhā once again invokes God in her request to him:

868. “In the name of the Pure One who made you so pure, Who preferred you among the beauties of the two worlds.	به پاکی که اینچنین پاک آفریدت ز خوبان دو عالم برگزیدت
869. “Make my grief short, Make me aware of your name and city.”	که اندوه مرا کوتاهیی ده ز نام و شهر خویش آگاهیی ده

These two passages are notable because they demonstrate Zulaykhā’s awareness of God as the creator of God’s beauty and the cause of her love for him. This, I suggest, is the meaning (*maʿnā*) behind Yūsuf’s form (*ṣūra*). While one might argue that the word *ṣāniʿ*, “creator,” in line 788 (from the passage regarding her first dream) does not refer to the one true God but rather a hypothetical, powerful creator, I do not find such an argument convincing. At no point in the story does Yūsuf ever have to tell Zulaykhā that God is the creator of his beauty. This differs from his interaction with Bāzighih, discussed in the preceding dissertation chapter. When Bāzighih asks Yūsuf who made him beautiful, Yūsuf replies that God did.[151] In contrast, when Yūsuf rejects Zulaykhā’s romantic advances later in the story—after she has her husband, the vizier of Egypt, purchase Yūsuf as an enslaved servant in their household—he does not say that she should love God instead of him because God ultimately is the source of his beauty. Instead he says, when Zulaykhā’s nurse approaches him, that it would be immoral to commit adultery with his master’s wife (lines 1997–2013). When Zulaykhā approaches him herself, he replies to her that if she truly loved him, she should honor his wishes, which is that she leave him be and not pursue him (lines 2062–2066). Zulaykhā does not need to be told that God is the source of Yūsuf’s beauty because she already knows this.

[151] Jāmī, *YZ*, line 1729.

Furthermore, Zulaykhā's dreams agree with Jāmī's account of creation outlined in earlier chapters of the *maṯnavī*, which further suggests that she is correctly referring to the one true God when she refers to Yūsuf's creator. As discussed in the previous dissertation chapter, in chapters 10–12 of the *maṯnavī*, Jāmī describes the emergence of love as a response to the manifestation of God's beauty in the various forms of the world. For example, when the light of God's Beauty shone on the rose, the nightingale fell in love with it; when the light of God's Beauty lit a candle, a hundred moths burned themselves in the flame (lines 328–329). Zulaykhā alludes to this when she says that the Creator made a lit candle from Yūsuf's face that burned her soul (line 791), and the following lines reiterate this notion.

Additionally, when Zulaykhā says that Yūsuf is more beautiful than anyone else (lines 789 and 869), she is correctly describing God's intentional act of granting Yūsuf more beauty than any other being that God created. This account of God's creation of Yūsuf is provided in chapters 13 and 14 of the *maṯnavī*, which follow the chapters on love already mentioned (chapters 10–12) and precede Zulaykhā's dream episodes. In chapter 13, Jāmī sets the scene of Yūsuf's creation during the time of the "Primordial Covenant," which is narrated in the seventh *sūra* of the Qurʾān, *āyāt* 172–173. During this incident, which takes place before the creation of the world, God draws out all of Adam's progeny from Adam's loins, and they attest to God's lordship over them.[152] According to Lewisohn, "The entire mythopoetic romance of Sufism

[152] Wadad Kadi (al-Qadi), "The Primordial Covenant and Human History in the Qur'ān," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 147, no. 4 (2003): 332–38, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1558296.

developed out of this primordial, pre-eternal covenant (*mīthāq*) between man and God."[153] Jāmī writes,

421. When they opened [Adam's] world-seeing eye, Before him, they illuminated his progeny	که چون چشم جهان بینش گشادند بر او اولاد او را جلوه دادند
422. The rows of the Prophets stood, front and back, Each row in its own station[154]	صفوف انبیا یکجا پس و پیش ستاده هر صفی در پایهٔ خویش

The prophets are accompanied by the saints, who stand in their own rows, followed by earthly kings and all other people (lines 423–426). However, when Adam looks to this progeny of his (line 427), what catches his eye is Yūsuf and his beauty. Jāmī writes,

428. To his eye came Yūsuf, like a moon; Not a moon—the sun at the peak of glory and status	به چشمش آمد یوسف چو یکی ماه نه مه خورشید اوج عزّت و جاه
429. Like a candle of the gathering, he was distinguished from that group, In the middle of that gathering, elevated like a candle	چو شمع انجمن زان جمع ممتاز میان جمع شمع آسا سرافراز
430. The beauty of the lovely ones was lost before him, Just as the stars are lost on account of the sun's rays.[155]	جمال نیکوان در پیش او گم چنان کز پرتو خورشید انجم

Yūsuf's beauty outshines the beauty of all the rest of Adam's progeny, a point that Jāmī reiterates later in the same chapter (line 444–447). Reading Zulaykhā's speech in this context suggests that her reference to Yūsuf as the most beautiful being in all of creation is not simply hyperbole but an accurate account of Yūsuf's coming into being.

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[153] Leonard Lewisohn, "Sufism's Religion of Love, from Rābi'a to Ibn 'Arabī," in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 150.

[154] Jāmī, *YZ*, 40.

[155] Jāmī, *YZ*, 40.

The truthfulness of Zulaykhā's dreams is further supported by Jāmī's references to the process of dreaming itself, which echoes theories of dreams by prior Muslim thinkers with whose work Jāmī was familiar, namely Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and Ibn ʿArabī.[156] Jāmī describes Zulaykhā's dream of Yūsuf in a way similar to how al-Ghazālī describes veridical dreams. Jāmī writes,

608. In sleep, the form-seeing eye dosed, But the other eye, from the heart, was open.	به خوابش چشم صورت بین غنوده ولی چشم دگر از دل گشوده
609. There came from her door suddenly a youth. What am I saying? Not a youth, but a spirit.	درآمد از درش ناگه جوانی چه می‌گویم جوانی نی که جانی
610. A blessed figure from the world of light— In the garden of paradise, he had plundered the houris,	همایون پیکری از عالم نور به باغ خلد کرده غارت حور
611. Robbed them, one by one, of their beauty and comeliness; Took from them, one after the other, their coquetry and amorous playfulness.[157]	ربوده سر به سر حسن و جمالش گرفته یک به یک غنج و دلالش

The image of the eye that the heart possesses that is open while Zulaykhā's actual eye is asleep recalls al-Ghazālī's account of the heart as essentially synonymous with the human rational soul.[158] Alexander Treiger explains, "[I]n the *Niche of Lights* al-Ghazālī insists that the intellect

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[156] The study of dreams and visions in premodern Islamic contexts has produced an extensive body of scholarship. Good recent overview volumes are: Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Dreams and Visions in the World of Islam: A History of Muslim Dreaming and Foreknowing* (I.B. Tauris: 2015); Özgen Felek and Alexander D. Knysh, eds., *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies* (State University of New York Press, 2012); and Louise Marlow, ed., *Dreaming across Boundaries: The Interpretation of Dreams in Islamic Lands* (Ilex Foundation and the Center for Hellenic Studies, Trustees of Harvard University, 2008).

[157] Jāmī, *YZ*, 49.

[158] Alexander Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and its Avicennian Foundation* (Routledge: 2012), 60.

is also a kind of 'eye' of the heart analogous to the physical eye."[159] In his magnum opus, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, al-Ghazālī uses a different image—that of the heart possessing two doors. According to Aaron Hughes,

> Ghazali claims that there are two doors to the heart. One of these doors is open to the five senses (*al-ḥawâss al-khums*), and the other, to the world of angels and the "Guarded Tablet" (*al-lauḥ al-mahfûz*)…[T]he latter door…leads to true, infallible knowledge because it is opened by means of unveiling (*iktishâf*) Truth by means of embodied images. The prophets receive this knowledge though prophetic revelation (*waḥy*), the Sufis and saints experience similar knowledge through waking visions (*ruʾya*) and dreams (*manâmât*), and common people experience it solely through dreams. The difference among the knowledges of the prophets, the Sufis, and ordinary Muslims through this type of unveiling, then, is one of degree, not of kind.[160]

The "embodied images" that Hughes refers to come from "Guarded Tablet" or "Preserved Tablet," which al-Ghazālī defines as "the blueprint of the world, drafted by God with the Pen before the creation."[161] Treiger further explains that "the Preserved Tablet is a mirror, containing 'all the inscriptions of knowledge' (*rusūm al-ʿilm kulluhā*) and 'the form of all beings' (*ṣūrat-e jomle mowjūdāt*). Thus, the human heart and the Preserved Tablet are two immaterial mirrors facing one another."[162] The reason for the mirror of the heart being able to

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[159] Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge*, 59.

[160] Aaron Hughes, "Imagining the Divine: Ghazali on Imagination, Dreams, and Dreaming," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 70, no. 1 (March 2002): 46–47, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1466368. Parentheses in original. See also Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge*, 71.

[161] Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge*, 106.

[162] Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge*, 106.

more readily reflect the images of the Preserved Tablet during sleep is that during sleep, the other opening of the heart, the one open to the five senses, is closed.[163]

Though al-Ghazālī expresses his theory of dreams across a range of his works, his formulation of that theory in his Persian-language treatise, *Kīmiyā-i Saʿādat*, is most useful for my argument here, as we know that Jāmī was intimately familiar with that particular text. As Ökten points out, Jāmī interpreted a particular passage from the opening of al-Ghazālī's *Kīmiyā* as indicating al-Ghazālī's basic agreement with Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of the "unity of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).[164] Al-Ghazālī writes that when one is asleep, "the path of the senses is closed off, that inner door [of the heart] becomes open, and from the realm of the angels [*malakūt*], the Unseen [*ghayb*] and the Preserved Tablet [*lawḥ-i maḥfūẓ*] begin to appear, such that [the heart] comes to see and know what will happen in the future. It is either clear what will happen, or it comes in the form of images, upon which falls the need to be interpreted."[165] I will return to al-Ghazālī's concept of the Preserved Tablet, which he equates with the astronomical entity of the Soul of the Sphere of the Fixed Stars,[166] in the following dissertation chapter, in which I argue that Yūsuf's act of falling in love with Zulaykhā resembles a dream. For our purposes here, however, the importance of reading Jāmī's lines against al-Ghazālī's theory is that the latter

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[163] Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge*, 69, 80.

[164] Ökten, "Jāmī," 318.

[165] al-Ghazālī, *Kīmiyā-yi Saʿādat*, 1:28, translation mine.

[166] Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge*, 107.

allows us to understand Zulaykhā's dream of Yūsuf as containing true knowledge, including the knowledge that God is the divine creator and source of Yūsuf's beauty.

Zulaykhā thus has something crucial in common with Yūsuf, prophet and dream interpreter par excellence. I suggest that her dream is not one that requires interpretation. For al-Ghazālī, ordinary people and prophets both receive divine knowledge in their dreams. However, the difference between average believers and prophets is that the dreams of average people need to be properly interpreted; the dreams of prophets are immediately understood by prophets without additional interpretation.[167] As Treiger explains, according to al-Ghazālī, when dreaming, "our imagination…encodes information received from the supernal world in dissimilar images. [These] dissimilar images require…allegorical explanation, called *ta'bīr* in the case of dreams. This allegorical explanation unravels the intellectual meaning (*ma'nā*), true reality (*ḥaqīqa*), and 'spirit' (*rūḥ*) of an image, effectively discarding its sensory form."[168] When Zulaykhā sees Yūsuf in her dreams, he is not a symbol or image to be allegorically interpreted. Examples that al-Ghazālī gives of allegorical interpretations for dream images include, for example, interpreting the image of the sun as symbolizing the human intellect, or interpreting the moon as representing a vizier.[169] This is not the case for Zulaykhā's dream image of Yūsuf. He is not a symbol of any entity besides himself, and everything he tells her is true. Zulaykhā's misinterpretation occurs only because she does not recognize that he is describing a future about

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[167] Hughes, "Imagining the Divine," 45; Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge*, 80.

[168] Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge*, 91. Parentheses in original.

[169] Hughes, *Imagining the Divine*, 43.

himself. During her third dream of him, the dream image of Yūsuf tells her that he is the ʿazīz of Egypt.[170] This is a statement about the future: Yūsuf will eventually become the ʿazīz of Egypt, but at this point in the narrative, he is still a boy. Zulaykhā incorrectly interprets this statement as referring to the present, which causes her to seek to marry the current ʿazīz of Egypt who, to her horror, is not the person with whom she has fallen in love in her dreams. Zulaykhā's mistake is not one of taking an outward form as equal to the meaning it conveys. Rather, she simply is unaware that she is seeing the future, not the present.

In passing, I want to note a number of departures that Jāmī takes from al-Ghazālī's model. These departures in Jāmī's text can partially be explained by the dream theories espoused by thinkers after al-Ghazālī, namely Ibn ʿArabī and al-Qayṣarī. However, even the incorporation of these latter dream theories into interpretation of these dream episodes does not contradict the claim that Zulaykhā is already aware of the meaning that Yūsuf's form conveys. One difference between Jāmī's account and al-Ghazālī's model is that for al-Ghazālī, the images that one's imagination uses to encode knowledge or meanings (*maʿānī*) from the Preserved Tablet correspond to objects of sense perception that one has actually encountered in one's lifetime. The mind combines these images into novel forms, but the imagination cannot produce an image in a dream of an object or person that one has not encountered in waking life.[171] For this reason, according to al-Ghazālī, allegorical interpretation is required, at least for people other than prophets.

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[170] Jāmī, YZ, 61, lines 870–871.

[171] Hughes, "Imagining the Divine," 44–45; Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge*, 56–57.

Another difference between Jāmī's account of Zulaykhā's dream and al-Ghazālī's theory is that, for Jāmī, the forms that one sees in the visible world while one is awake can mislead in the same way that dream images can. In line 639, Jāmī writes that all of us humans are captive to forms—he does not mean only when dreaming. This echoes his sentiment from chapter 11, quoted above: "Because without drinking the wine of form, / You would not come to taste the dregs of meaning. // "However, it is necessary not to stay within form, / But rather to quickly carry oneself over this bridge" (lines 362–363). For al-Ghazālī, however, dream images and waking sense perceptions arise in the body from separate operations—it is only when the heart is closed off to external senses that it can receive images from the Preserved Tablet. The forms that one sees while asleep are, therefore, different from the forms one sees while awake. Jāmī, however, makes no such distinction between these forms.

In considering dream images to be not fundamentally different from the images that one perceives with the eye when one is awake, Jāmī seems to align himself with the views of Ibn ʿArabī and al-Qayṣarī. For example, in his introduction to his commentary on *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, al-Qayṣarī devotes an entire chapter to the "Imaginal World," which can be accessed both while dreaming and while waking. This helps to explain how Jāmī compares dream images to forms in the manifest, visible world that one experiences while awake. Al-Qayṣarī writes, "Witnessing of forms sometimes occurs in wakefulness and sometimes in sleep, just as sleep is divided into confused dreams and other types. Likewise, that which is seen in wakefulness is divided into purely real events, corresponding to actuality, or purely imagined events…."[172] For al-Qayṣarī, unlike for al-Ghazālī, there is no ontological distinction between the forms that one witnesses in

[172] al-Qayṣarī, *The Horizons of Being*, trans. Ali, 157.

sleep and the forms that one witnesses while awake. For al-Ghazālī, only the former communicate the knowledge found in the Preserved Tablet, such as future events.

Part of the reason for this is that Akbarian cosmology differs from al-Ghazālī's in where it locates the source of dream images. Specifically, for al-Ghazālī, borrowing from Ibn Sīnā, the knowledge contained in the preserved tablet that is reflected in forms on the mirror of the heart during sleep belongs to the realm of the unseen, or *ghayb*. This knowledge includes "forms of the particulars, i.e. past, present, and future individuals and events, generated, and hence also thought, by the souls of the celestial spheres."[173] However, members of the Akbarian School, like al-Qayṣarī, conceive of the imaginal world, the source of dream images, as not strictly belonging to the realm of the unseen. Rather, it is one of the Five Presences or Universal Worlds—the planes of God's manifestation that comprise all of existence—that falls under the category of the Visible World, not the Invisible or Unseen. As Mukhtar Ali explains,

> Ibn al-ʿArabī's followers have enumerated the Universal Worlds or Presences according to various typology. Generally, the Presences can be divided as follows: The degree of Divinity is the Unseen, which is divided into the absolute Unseen—that includes the names and attributes—and the relative Unseen, which is the Intellectual World. The Visible is also divided into the absolute Visible, the sensory world, and the relative Visible, the Imaginal World. The fifth Presence is the Perfect Human which encompass them all.[174]

The fact that the Imaginal World, the source of dream images, is part of the Visible World means that images encountered in both can be interpreted as signs of God's self-disclosure. This aligns with what Jāmī writes in chapters 10–12 of *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*, discussed in the preceding

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[173] Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge*, 79.

[174] Ali, *Philosophical Sufism*, 99.

dissertation chapter, in which Jāmī describes all the forms of the visible world as illuminated by the light of God's Beauty. As Ibn ʿArabī explains in his *Fuṣūṣ*,

> [T]he Messenger of God said: "People are asleep, and when they die, they wake up." Everything one sees while awake is like this, even if the states (of sleep and wakefulness) are different.…[H]is whole life in this world should be gauged in this manner, that is, as a dream within a dream (*manām fī manām*). All things of this kind belong to the world of imagination (*ʿālam al-khayāl*), and for this reason they are interpreted, meaning a thing that is essentially in a certain form appears in another form. Hence, the interpreter (*ʿābir*), if he is correct, passes from the form seen by the sleeper to the true (meaningful) form it is.[175]

This passage from the *Fuṣūṣ* makes it clear that both the forms that one sees in dreams and those that one sees in waking life need to be interpreted, for life is essentially a "dream within a dream." This notion is echoed in Jāmī's lines 639 and 640, above, in which the poet compares all human beings to the dreaming Zulaykhā: all of us are beholden to forms whose meanings escape our cognitive grasp. Jāmī expresses agreement with Ibn ʿArabī's point that the forms of the sensory world require interpretation in the same way as forms seen in dreams in his commentary on Ibn ʿArabī's abridgment of the *Fuṣūṣ*. Jāmī writes,

> Know that everything which appears in the sensory world is like that which appears in sleep. But people are neglectful of perceiving the realities and meanings which are embraced by the forms which appear in the world, just as the Prophet said, "People are asleep, and when they die, they awake." And just as the gnostic knows through interpretation what is meant by the forms which are witnessed in dreams, so the gnostic who knows the realities of things also knows what is meant by the forms which appear in the sensory world. Therefore he passes from them to their intention. So when the gnostic sees a form or hears some words, or when a meaning falls into his heart, he infers from them their principles and knows what God means by them. For this reason it has been said, "Verily all things that happen in the world are messengers from God to the servant

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[175] Binyamin Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʿArabī's Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam: An Annotated Translation of "The Bezels of Wisdom*" (Routledge, 2015), 68. Parentheses in original.

> delivering their messages. He understands them who understands them, and he turns away from them who is ignorant of them."[176]

This passage emphatically explains that the forms of the sensory world and the imaginal world are the same kinds of forms: forms needing interpretation to be recognized as signs of God.

This view differs significantly from the view that al-Ghazālī expresses in his *Kīmiyā*. For him, the images that appear on the heart/rational soul are different from the images that one witnesses with one's physical eye. These images are the product of different sensory and bodily processes. He writes,

> Do not suppose that the door of the heart that is open to the angelic realm [*malakūt*] is closed except during sleep or death. This is not the case. Rather, while awake, if one trains oneself and removes one's heart from anger, lust, bad manners, and the necessities of this world; and sits in a vacant place and closes one's eyes; and abandons the use of one's senses; and makes one's heart accord with the world of dominion, such that one repeatedly utters, "God, God," with one's heart and not with one's tongue; then what happens is that one becomes unaware of oneself and has no awareness of the world or anything except for God Most High. When this happens, even if one is awake, the door of the heart opens, and what others see in sleep, one sees while awake; and the souls of the angels become visible in beautiful forms.[177]

For al-Ghazalī, the forms that one sees through the heart's contact with the Preserved Tablet result from the abandonment of the external senses. This allows one to become aware of God, which differs from Jāmī and Ibn ʿArabī's point that one can see any sign in the visible world as a sign of God, without shutting off one's senses to see only forms drawn from the Preserved

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[176] William C. Chittick, "Ibn 'Arabi's Own Summary of the *Fuṣûṣ*: 'The Imprint of the Bezels of Wisdom," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 1 (1982): 59–60. For the Arabic text, see Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 180.

[177] al-Ghazālī, *Kīmiyā-yi Saʿādat*, 1:29–30.

Tablet, the latter of which have specific supernatural meanings (for example, representing the souls of the angels).

For our purposes, Jāmī's view of dream images and the forms that one witnesses in sleep both being forms (*ṣuwar*) that simultaneously conceal and convey the meaning (*maʿnā*) informs Zulaykhā's ability to perceive the meaning conveyed by Yūsuf's form *both* in dreams *and* in waking life. In other words, though her dream is a veridical dream, in which she acquires knowledge of the future while also perceiving the true meaning of Yūsuf's form, she does not forget this true meaning when she is awake. Indeed, in her final seduction attempt, she, as she had done in her dreams, invokes God as the creator of Yūsuf's beauty to convince him to return her love. She says,

2384. "For years, I have been burning from your brand, From desiring you, I have been unable to eat or sleep;	ز داغت سالها در تاب بودم ز شوقت بیخور و بیخواب بودم
2385. "Do not leave me in such heat anymore; Do not leave me hungry and sleepless.	مرا زین بیشتر در تاب مگذار چنینم بیخور و بیخواب مگذار
2386. "In the name of that God, I bind you with an oath, Who is Lord of all lords,	به حق آن خدایی بر تو سوگند که باشد بر خداوندان خداوند
2387. "By this world-conquering beauty that God gave you, By this loveliness that he placed upon your cheek"	به این حسن جهانگیری که دادت به این خوبی که در عارض نهادت

I will return to this scene in the following dissertation chapter. For now, its significance is that it conveys the fact that, in both sleep and during wakefulness, then, Zulaykhā is aware of the meaning Yūsuf's beauty conveys—his beauty comes from God. Her obstacle on the path of love is not her ignorance of this truth.

Rather, if there is an obstacle that prevents the consummation of Zulaykhā's love, it is her worship of her idol. Indeed, Yūsuf is about to relent to her advances when he observes a curtain

in the chamber and asks her what is behind it (lines 2466–2467). She tells him that it is the golden idol that she has worshipped her whole life, to which she prostrates every hour (lines 2468–2470). She had hidden it behind the curtain so that it would not witness her affair with Yūsuf (lines 2471–2472). When Yūsuf hears this, he comes to his senses (line 2473). He is ashamed to be unafraid to commit adultery before the eyes of the all-knowing God while Zulaykhā is afraid of the gaze of her false idol. He tells her,

2474. "You feel shame before the eyes of what is dead, But I am troubled by such lifeless things	تو را آید به چشم از مردگان شرم وز این نازندگان در خاطر آزرم
2475. "Am I not afraid of the Knowing, the Seeing? Am I not afraid of the Everlasting, the Powerful?"	من از دانای بینا می‌نترسم ز قیّوم توانا توانا می‌نترسم

This causes him to flee, which prompts Zulaykhā to chase him and tear his tunic from behind, a pivotal moment in all versions of the narrative, both Quranic and post-Quranic.

Indeed, Zulaykhā is only united with Yūsuf after she breaks her idol. In light of these facts, one might say that, though she is aware of the meaning of Yūsuf's form—its being a manifestation of God's beauty—her idolatry and polytheism constitutes an improper recognition of this fact. Her association of partners with God, which constitutes the major sin of *shirk* in Islamic thought, can be seen as indicative of a lack of awareness of God, the source of Yūsuf's beauty, as the only true object of worship.

However, I suggest that such a reading is still simplistic. Even when Zulaykhā gives up her idol, she frees herself from the blame of her idolatry. She recognizes God as the only object of worship, and her love for her idol as ultimately stemming from God. Her adoration of the idol can be read as a parallel to her adoration of Yūsuf—in both cases, she is giving what is due to

God, whether worship or love, to an entity that is not God but merely God's creation. Her love for God's creation is, ultimately, love for God.

2.3. Zulaykhā's Supposed Idolatry

Zulaykhā's destruction of her idol occurs near the end of the narrative, after Yūsuf finds himself in the position of vizier (*ʿazīz*) of Egypt, fulfilling what he (or his image) had told Zulaykhā in her dream. This occurs as the result of the king of Egypt freeing Yūsuf from prison (where he had been put by Zulaykhā due to his rejection of her advances) after Yūsuf interprets the king's dream. The previous vizier, Zulaykhā's husband, has passed away, leaving Zulaykhā impoverished. She has aged and her physical condition has significantly deteriorated; she has lost both her beauty and her sight. She lives in a hut made of reeds on the side of a royal road, still so in love with Yūsuf that she finds satisfaction in simply hearing the noise caused by his cavalry as they travel that route.

However, one day, she becomes overwhelmed with the desire to see him, no longer content to merely listen to the sounds of his entourage passing by. She prays to her idol, asking it to return her sight to her so that she may see Yūsuf again. This represents the last instance of her continuing her idolatrous worship. Jāmī writes,

3366. One night, she rubbed her head on the ground before that idol, The worship of which had been her life's affair.	شبی سر پیش آن بت بر زمین سود که عمری در پرستش کارش این بود
3367. "Oh you whose beauty is the *qibla* of my soul, In worship, my head lies beneath your feet.	بگفت ای قبلهٔ جانم جمالت سر من در عبادت پایمالت
3368. "You whom I have spent a lifetime worshiping with my soul,	تو را عمریست کز جان میپرستم

The jewel of my sight has escaped my hand.	برون شد گوهر بینش[178] ز دستم
3369. “With your own eye, look upon my disgrace; To my eye, give back my capacity to see.	به چشم خود ببین رسواییم را به چشمم باز ده بیناییم را
3370. “For so long have I stayed separated from Yūsuf— Give me my sight so that I might see him from afar.	ز یوسف چند باشم مانده مهجور بده چشمی که رویش بینم از دور
3371. “In every moment, I have no wish Other than to see Yūsuf	مرا در هیچ وقتی و مقامی بجز دیدار یوسف نیست کامی
3372. Grant my wish, if you are able, If you were to grant my wish, then you know how to.”	بده کام مرا گر می‌توانی چو دادی کام من دیگر تو دانی

Zulaykhā continues to believe in the sentience and efficacy of her idol. Yūsuf had called it lifeless and blind when he had fled from her during her final seduction attempt (lines 2474 and 2475, quoted above), but this is not enough for Zulaykhā to lose her faith in it. It is only the idol’s inability to grant her wish that finally causes her to lose her faith in it. She approaches the road upon hearing Yūsuf’s horses, only to be turned away by his guards. Frustrated, she abjures her idol, telling it that it has only caused her hardship (lines 3386–3390).

3386. She said, “Oh stone, the vessel of my glory and dignity, On every road that I am on, you are the stone [blocking] my path.	که ای سنگی سبوی عز و جاهم به هر راهی که باشم سنگ راهم
3387. “Because of you, the road of my fortune has become narrow; It would be proper to strike your heart with stone.	شد از تو راه بختم تنگ بر دل سزد گر از تو کوبم سنگ بر دل
3388. “When I prostrated before your face, I traveled the road of my own ruin	به پیش روی تو چو سجده بردم به سر راه وبال خود سپردم

[178] Though the editors have chosen to read *dānesh* here instead of *bīnash*, they note that five of the manuscripts used for the preparation of this edition have *bīnash* here instead. I have opted for this reading considering the context of the following lines, in which Zulaykhā asks for her sight to be restored. See Jāmī, *YZ*, 187n6.

3389. “Weeping, every wish I asked of you, I wash my hands of it from the matters of the two worlds.	به گریه از تو هر کامی که جستم ز کام هر دو عالم دست شستم
3390. “You are a stone, I will be free of your disgrace, With stone, I will shatter the jewel of [your] power.”	تو سنگی خواهم از ننگ تو رستن به سنگی گوهر قدرت شکستن

In other words, it was not Yūsuf who taught Zulaykhā to forego her idol. Rather, she abandons it because it cannot grant her what she really wants, indeed her only wish: to see Yūsuf again. Her love for Yūsuf has taken precedence over her worship and adoration of the idol, which she had worshipped her whole life. One can read this transformation in her as aligning with the classical model of love described in the previous chapter, in which one’s love for a human being ultimately leads them to loving God. Indeed, Jāmī describes her conversion to true monotheism as a total transformation, writing:

3391. She said this, and with the blow of a hard stone, Like Abraham, she broke it [the idol] piece by piece.	بگفت این پس به زخم سنگ خاره خلیل آسا شکستش پاره پاره
3392. Because she broke it with swiftness and vigor, She set her affairs right by means of this breaking.	چو بشکستش به چالاکی و چستی به کارش زان شکست آمد درستی
3393. When she had finished with the work of breaking the idol, She performed ritual ablutions with tears from her eyes and blood from her heart.	ز شغل بت شکستن چون بپرداخت به آب چشم و خون دل وضو ساخت

She transforms from a lifelong lover and worshipper of her idol into a likeness of the prophet Ibrāhīm (Abraham), the paradigmatic idol smasher, whose epithet is “Khalīl Allāh,” or the “friend of God.” Furthermore, as Jāmī’s reference to *wuḍuʾ* shows, her tears and blood have effectively purified her to be ready for ritual worship of the one true God. All of this suggests that, instead of departing from the model of using human love as a bridge to divine love, Zulaykhā is on the path to doing what she is expected to do as a lover. Her love for her human

beloved, Yūsuf, has prepared her to love God, the source of Yūsuf's beauty and the only true object of love and worship.

However, I nonetheless suggest that Zulaykhā's case is, in fact, more complex than a straightforward example of the model of human love leading to divine love. This is because, though she relinquishes her idolatry, she nonetheless reframes her idolatry as true worship. Indeed, she had always known God—the Creator and the Lord of all lords, as Zulaykhā had called him—to be the originator of Yūsuf's beauty. Instead of renouncing her idol-worship, she sees it as a form of correctly worshipping the true God, of whom she had always been aware. Furthermore, her love of God does not override or transcend her love for Yūsuf. In fact, her iconoclasm and her turning toward God seem to be conditioned upon God's ability to succeed where her idol had failed. She turns to worship God in the hope that God, unlike her idol, may restore her sight to her. It is almost as though she were making a pragmatic decision—if praying to her idol did not give her the ability to see Yūsuf again, maybe praying to God would.

Both of these notions are conveyed in her address to God, which follows immediately after her destruction of her idol. Firstly, she explains that God is ultimately the reason behind her idolatry:

3394. She humbled herself and rubbed her face on the ground; She let out a cry toward God's pure throne:	تضرع کرد و رو بر خاک مالید به درگاه خدای پاک نالید
3395. "Oh You who loves the lowly— Idols, idol-makers, and idolaters alike—	که ای عشق تو را از زیر دستان بتان و بتگران و بت‌پرستان
3396. "If your reflection had not fallen upon the idol, No one would ever have bowed their heads before any idol,	اگر نه عکس تو بر بت فتادی به پیش بت کسی کی سر نهادی
3397. "You lacerate the heart of the idol maker with your love,	دل بتگر به مهر خود خراشی

And from fire, you cast desire upon the idol.	وز آتش افکنی بر بت تراشی
3398. “Whoever falls down before an idol Says that idol-worshipper is [actually] a worshipper of God.	کسی در پیش بت افتاده پست است که گوید بت‌پرست ایزد پرست است

Zulaykhā’s address to God here confirms the Akbarian cosmology of the early chapters of the *maṯnavī*. All love, including love of idols, comes from God. The idol, like all of creation, is a manifestation of God’s essence. The idol-maker’s love for the idol is therefore like the love of the nightingale for the rose and the moth for the flame. It is ultimately nothing other than the love of God, the real true meaning behind all forms.

It is against the context of these first lines of Zulaykhā’s address that I read the rest of her supplication. Though she acknowledges that idolatry has brought her shame, her reason for worshipping God is her hope that God might restore her sight to her:

3399. “Whenever I have bowed my face before the idol, oh God, I have done injustice to myself, oh God.	اگر رو در بت آوردم خدایا بر آن بر خود جفا کردم خدایا
3400. “By your grace, excuse my injustice to myself. I have erred—forgive my error.	به لطف خود جفای من بیاموز خطا کردم خطای من بیاموز
3401. “Because of my traveling the path of error, You have robbed the jewel of my eye from me	ز بس راه خطا پیمایی از من ستاندی گوهر بینایی از من
3402. “Because you have scattered the dust of error off of me, Give me what you have stolen.	چو آن گرد خطا از من فشاندی به من ده آنچ از من ستاندی
3403. “May my heart be free of the stain of regret; May I pluck a flower from Yūsuf’s garden.	بود دل فارغ از داغ تأسف بچینم لاله‌ای از باغ یوسف

Zulaykhā is not worshipping God unconditionally because of her awareness that God is the only worthy object of worship. Instead, her worship is predicated on her hope that it might give her what she wants: the chance to see Yūsuf again. Even though her love of Yūsuf has led her to destroying her idol and worshipping God, she hopes that her love of God will lead her back to

Yūsuf. Her love for God has not superseded her love for Yūsuf. Rather, her love for Yūsuf is still her ultimate goal, and her worship of God is a means by which she hopes to achieve her aim of reuniting with her beloved. This differs from the expectations of the model of human love being a bridge to divine love. As the prologue chapters of *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā* and Bāzighih's story have shown, the goal for human love is to be able to leave behind the love of form so that one comes to love God alone. For Zulaykhā, this is never the case. Her love for God is inseparable from her love for Yūsuf.

Indeed, it is Yūsuf who answers her prayer. Immediately after she prays to God, she lets out a cry that Yūsuf hears (lines 3404–3418). He asks a servant of his to bring Zulaykhā to him, initially unaware of who she is. She seeks a private audience with him, and once he grants this to her, she tells him who she is (lines 3419–3431). Upon learning her identity, he feels compassion for her and sorrow for her state: her beauty is gone, she has become old, and she has spent all her wealth paying people who could bring her news of her beloved Yūsuf (lines 3436–3448). He asks her what he can give her, and before making her request, she makes him promise to fulfill her wishes (lines 3449–3452). Jāmī writes,

3455. He said, "Any wish of yours that I know of today, I will grant with haste if I am able."	که هر حاجت که امروز از تو دانم روا سازم بزودی گر توانم
3456. She said, "First, my beauty and my youth, In the way that you had known and seen,	بگفت اوّل جمال است و جوانی بدان گونه که تو دیدی و دانی
3457. "Next, sight so that I might see your face And pluck a rose from the garden of your cheek."	دگر چشمی که دیدار تو بینم گلی از باغ رخسار تو چینم
3458. Yūsuf moved his lips in prayer; From his lips, he let flow the water of life.	بجنبانید لب یوسف دعا را روان کرد از دو لب آب بقا را
3459. He gave life back to her once-dead beauty;	جمال مرده‌اش را زندگی داد

He gave her face the light of happiness.	رخش را طلعت فرخندگی داد

Jāmī follows this with an extended description of Zulaykhā's beauty and youth being restored to her (3460–3465). This passage emphasizes Yūsuf's role and agency in fulfilling Zulaykhā's prayer to God. Though Jāmī describes Yūsuf as praying (line 3548), never letting the reader forget that Yūsuf's ability to perform miracles ultimately comes from God, God's role in granting Zulaykhā's wish is significantly downplayed. He tells her that he will grant her whatever wish that he is able to, never invoking God or expressing a need for his permission (line 3455). Indeed, the request she makes to him matches the language of her prayer to God: she reiterates, for example, her desire to pluck a flower from the garden of his face (lines 3403 and 3457). This scene differs from the concluding scene of the chapter, in which Yūsuf asks Zulaykhā if she has any other wishes that he might be able to grant. She tells him that she wants to be united with him in marriage (lines 3466–3471). Yūsuf, instead of granting her wish immediately, as he had done when she had asked for her beauty, youth, and sight to be restored, hesitates and gives no reply. At that point, he hears the angel Gabriel speak to him, who tells him that God has seen into Zulaykhā's heart, forgiven her past transgressions, and approves of their marriage (lines 3472–3480). Jāmī does not portray God as expressly approving of Zulaykhā's earlier wish, even though God's role is implied in Yūsuf's act of praying. I suggest that Jāmī is emphasizing Yūsuf's role in granting Zulaykhā's wish, the very wish that her idol had failed to grant, which had caused her to turn to God. Yūsuf acting as the agent of the fulfillment of her prayer to God supports my shows that, even when she has turned to worship God, she cannot abandon Yūsuf. He mediates her relationship with God. If he is the "bridge" to the "real," then she has not fully crossed over, and is in fact still standing on the bridge.

Indeed, Zulaykhā never fully crosses over from loving Yūsuf to loving God. As her death scene shows, her love for Yūsuf and her desire to be with him is her highest goal and desire, which is shown by the fact that her turn toward God in the first place had been conditioned by her hope that doing so would let her see Yūsuf again. Yūsuf takes pride of place in her heart until the moment of her death. She dies not so that she might die to the world and return to God, which is Yūsuf's expressed wish for dying. Rather, she kills herself because she cannot be apart from Yūsuf who, instead of God, is her true, highest love. Her wish in dying is that she may be reunited with him.

2.4. Dying to Be with Yūsuf

After the two lovers are united in marriage, they spend decades together, becoming parents and later grandparents. One day, Yūsuf has a dream in which his parents tell him that his time of death has come (lines 3606–3609). Though Zulaykhā feels the "fire of separation" (line 3612), Yūsuf is ready to leave his beloved, and the world, behind. Jāmī writes,

3613. But Yūsuf went outside of his condition, His desire increased for the eternal climes	ولی یوسف ز طور خود برون شد به اقلیم بقا شوقش فزون شد
3614. He lifted his foot from the grave of lust, He took the spacious road of the secret.	قدم زین تنگنای آز برداشت ره فسحتسرای راز برداشت

After becoming her lover (a point to be discussed in the following dissertation chapter), Yūsuf is ready to leave behind the material world of the senses (the "grave of lust") to return to God, his eternal source and sustainer. In the following lines, Yūsuf is described as accepting his imminent death and praying to God to be reunited with God (lines 3619–3621). Upon hearing Yūsuf's prayer, Zulaykhā becomes distraught, and she makes her own prayer to God. She asks that God take her life as well, because she cannot live in a world without Yūsuf. She says,

3633. “I do not have the ability to be apart from Yūsuf; Take my soul from my body with Yūsuf's soul.	ندارم طاقت هجران یوسف ز تن کش جان من با جان یوسف
3634. “I do not want life without his beauty, In the dominion of life, I do not want eternity.	نخواهم بی جمالش زندگی را به ملک زندگی پایندگی را
3635. “The sapling of my life has no leaf without him; Eternal life is death without him.	نهال عمر بی‌برگ است بی او حیات جاودان مرگ است بی او
3636. “According to the law of loyalty, it is not right For me to be in a world where he is not.	به قانون وفا نیکو نباشد که من باشم به گیتی او نباشد
3637. “If you do not make him my companion [in death], Then take me first, when you take him.	اگر با من نسازی همره او را مرا برون بر اوّل آنگه او را
3638. “I do not want to sit on one side, away from him, And look at a world without his beauty.	نمی‌خواهم کزو یکسو نشینم جهان را بی جمال او بینم

Her wish is very different from Yūsuf’s. While he wants to leave the temporal world behind to have eternal life (line 3618), she considers eternal life to be equivalent to death if it does not involve being with him. She has no desire to be with God. She only wants to be with Yūsuf.

One day, as Yūsuf readies his horse to set out, Gabriel tells him that his time has come, so he gathers his heirs together (lines 3641–3648). He asks them to bring Zulaykhā to him so that he can say goodbye, but she is in too much despair. He fears that the scar of losing him will remain with her until judgment day, and his heirs pray that God give her fortitude (lines 3649–3653). This prayer, however, is not answered by God. Zulaykhā stays true to her word to God; she refuses to live in a world without him.

Jāmī describes Zulaykhā’s anguish at Yūsuf’s death in graphic detail. Her death scene lasts almost seventy lines (lines 3662–3730). As soon as she hears of his passing, she loses consciousness three times for a period of three days each, regaining consciousness only to ask

about Yūsuf. When she finally learns that he has been buried, she tears her clothes and inflicts bodily self-harm:

3762. With her nails, she would make holes in her face, And for these estuaries, she would make rivers [with her tears]	به ناخن رخنه‌ها در روی می‌کند برای چشمهٔ خور جوی می‌کند
3763. And within each of these rivers that flowed from these springs, She turned jessamine into a bridal chamber, red like the Judas tree	به هر جویی کزآن چشمه روان کرد سمن را جلومگاه ارغوان کرد
3764. Her face started to scatter red lines, because of her nails, Like a vein against a bright eye	شد از ناخن به رخ گلگون خط افکن چو عرق ناخنه در چشمه روشن

In addition to clawing her cheeks such that her wounds formed rivers of blood, Zulaykhā strikes herself all over her body, forming bruises of various colors, which Jāmī compares to flowers:

3765. Deceiving herself, she kept striking her chest with stone, She continually slapped her rose-colored cheeks	به سینه از تغابن سنگ می‌زد طپانچه بر رخ گلرنگ می‌زد
3766. There, moist cornelian was growing out of silver, And from that, water-lilies were growing on tulips	ز سیم آنجا عقیق تر همی‌رست وز این بر لاله نیلوفر همی‌رست
3767. To her delicate head, she lifted her hand; From the force of her hand, she made it hurt.	به سوی فرق نازک برد پنجه ز زور پنجه آن را ساخت رنجه

This scene of self-mortification closely resembles an earlier scene in the *maṯnavī*, which takes place before Zulaykhā reunites with Yūsuf. Indeed, even before Zulaykhā builds her reed hut on the side of the road to be close to Yūsuf's entourage when it passes, her separation from him becomes too much for her to bear, and she despairs of ever seeing him again. Her sorrow from her separation from him leads her to cause herself bodily injury in much the same way as she does after his death. Jāmī writes,

3253. From her eyelashes tears of blood continually flowed— Not tears of blood, rather pure blood flowed.	ز مژگان دمبدم خوناب می‌ریخت مگو خوناب خون ناب می‌ریخت
3254. When she had a fever due to the heat of her heart's burning, Her lashes would pour water on her lip.	چو بود از تاب دل سوزان تاب او مژه می‌ریخت آبی در لب او
3255. She would not wash that bloody water from her face—you might say That she had a blush from that blood and tears	نمی‌شست از رخ آن خونابه گویی ازان خونابه بودش سرخرویی
3256. When she rouged her face from that blood and tears, She renewed the covenant of love in her heart.	چو زان خونابه رخ را غازه کردی به دل عقد محبت تازه کردی
3257. In that matter, she could not bring ready coin, Except the blood of her heart as the dowry for that matrimony	به روی کار ناوردی دم نقد بجز خون جگر کابین آن عقد
3258. At times, she would tear her rosy face with her nails, As her eye would open to reveal fountains of blood	گهی کندی به ناخن روی گلگون چو چشم خود گشادی چشمها خون
3259. On account of their redness, each [eye] was an inkwell; Out of her grief, she would write the deed of emancipation.	ز سرخی هر یکی بودی دواتی نوشتی از غمش خط نجاتی
3260. At times she would tear at her chest, at other times, her heart; From her life, she would erase everything except the image of her beloved	گهی سینه گهی دل می‌خراشید ز جان جز نقش جانان می‌تراشید
3261. She continually struck her knee with her palm; She gave the jessamine the color of the water-lily	همی‌زد بر سر زانو کف دست سمن را رنگ نیلوفر همی‌بست

These two scenes of self-harm include parallel images and actions. In both, Zulaykhā's face is red from the blood flowing over it, whether this blood comes from her eyes or from the fissures she has torn in her face. Indeed, in both scenes, she uses her fingernails to scratch or tear her face. She also strikes her body to bruise herself, and in both episodes, her bruises are compared to flowers changing colors to resemble a different flower.

Another parallel in both scenes is Jāmī's allusions to marriage. In the separation scene above, which takes place before Zulaykhā is reunited with Yūsuf, her blood is described as being the matrimonial price (*kābīn*, the sum that a bridegroom is expected to pay in case of divorce) (line 3257). In that line and the preceding one, Jāmī also makes two references to the marriage contract, or *ʿaqd*. Line 3259 furthermore includes a possible reference to divorce. I interpret *khaṭṭ-i najāt* to either mean a deed of manumission for an enslaved person—Zulaykhā's love enslaving her to Yūsuf, in this case—or a contract for divorce. These references to matrimony are echoed in Zulaykhā's death scene, in which Jāmī mentions the bridal chamber, or *jilvih-gāh* (line 3763). In both of these scenes, these references to marriage indicate Zulaykhā's fidelity to Yūsuf. Even before her actual marriage to him, the blood that she sheds pays the dowry for her marriage contract to him. Though her bloody tears draft her divorce contract, these same tears continually renew her marriage contract to him. Similarly, the reference to the bridal chamber in the context of her death scene conveys the fact that Zulaykhā remains wedded to Yūsuf even though he has passed on from the mortal realm into the realm of eternity.

The parallels between these two scenes of Zulaykhā's grieving Yūsuf's separation from her, whether in this world or across the veil between life and death, belie the idea that she has undergone a transformation that has involved her sublimating her love for Yūsuf into love for God. Even though the scene in which she destroys her idol occurs between these scenes of grief over her separation, the strong parallels between them convey that both before and after her conversion, Yūsuf is her true and highest object of love. Even if her love of Yūsuf has led her away from idolatry and toward loving God, that love for God has not supplanted her love for Yūsuf.

She further expresses desire to die so that she might be reunited with her true beloved—Yūsuf, instead of God—in her address to Yūsuf after his death. This address takes place a few lines after her scene of self-mortification. She says,

3695. "Come, oh my heart's wish, and see my deprivation! Under the shadow of the sky, see how oppressed I am!	بیا ای کام جان محرومیم بین ز ظلم آسمان مظلومیم بین
3696. "You cut yourself off from me, and you did not keep me in mind. You did not make me happy from seeing you.	بریدی از من و یادم نکردی به دیداری ز خود شادم نکردی
3697. "Oh faithful one! This was not faithfulness. This was not the way of love for beloveds.	وفادارا وفاداری نه این بود به یاران شیوهٔ یاری نه این بود
3698. "You cast me out of your heart, and you left. You threw me amidst dirt and blood, and you left.	مرا از دل برون افکندی و رفت میان خاک و خون افکندی و رفت
3699. "How strange—you splintered a thorn in my heart, Which will not come out except from my clay.	عجب خاری شکستی در دل من که بیرون ناید الّا از گل من
3700. "You thought it proper to make your way to a place From which no one ever returns.	نه جایی راه رفتن کردهای ساز کز آنجا هیچگه آید کسی باز
3701. "So, it is better for me to open my wings, And in one flight, come to you."	همان بهتر کز اینجا پر گشایم به یک پرواز کردن سویت آیم

Zulaykhā has by no means transcended her physical love for Yūsuf and transformed it into a disembodied love for God. If Yūsuf is the "bridge" (*qanṭarat*) to God-the-Real (*al-ḥaqīqa*), then she is still standing firmly on the bridge. Her desire to die does not match Yūsuf's. His wish had been to leave the temporal world behind for the realm of eternity, to "lift his foot from the grave of lust." He had wanted to leave behind the physical, manifest world in which one lusts after, or is attached to, physical forms. Zulaykhā's wish is to reunite with her beloved, and I suggest that she is motivated by an attachment to his physical beauty. The centrality of Yūsuf's physical form as the object of her love is confirmed by the moment immediately before her

death, when she gouges out her eyes. Jāmī writes of Zulaykhā, when she arrives at Yūsuf's grave:

3715. When her pain and grief exceeded all limits, She lowered her head to kiss the ground.	چو درد و حسرتش از حد برون شد به رسم خاکبوسی سرنگون شد
3716. She put her fingers in her eyes— She removed the narcissi from their pots.	به چشمان خود انگشتان در آورد دو نرگس را ز نرگسدان برآورد
3717. From her cup-like head, she threw them upon his soil, Saying, "It is better to plant narcissi in the ground,	به خاک وی فکند از کاسهٔ سر که نارگس کاشتن در خاک بهتر
3718. "Because my eyes are separated from your rose-like face, What use to me are eyes in this garden?"	چو باشد از گل رویت جدا چشم چه کار آید در این بستان چشم

Her reference to the physical, manifest world as a "garden" emphasizes the fact that it contains a plurality of visible forms. According to the Akbarian cosmology outlined in the prologue chapters of the *maṯnavī*, every visible form is a manifestation of God's essence through the mediation of God's names and attributes. Zulaykhā's rejection of the world can be read as a rejection of the capacity of any other forms in the world, besides Yūsuf's, to convey the divine meaning (*maʿnā*) of their being part of God's self-disclosure. Zulaykhā is declaring that, in the absence of his physical form, no visible form in the manifest world is worth looking at. Zulaykhā has not transcended his physical form in order to love God directly. Rather, without Yūsuf's form, her life and the world itself are worthless to her.

Jāmī does not appear to criticize her for her continued attachment to her beloved Yūsuf. He writes,

3721. She put her face blood-stained face to the soil [of his grave]; Wretched, she kissed the ground and gave up her soul.	به خاکش روی خون آلود بنهاد به مسکینی زمین بوسید و جان داد

3722. Happy is the lover who, when their soul leaves them, Rises up toward the scent of union with their beloved.	خوش آن عاشق که چون جانش برآید به بوی وصل جانانش برآید

In this passage, I interpret Zulaykhā's "beloved" (*jānānash*) as a reference to Yūsuf, not to God. She breathes her last breath while kissing Yūsuf's grave. Her hope in death was to be reunited with him, not with God. This fact is further illustrated by the reaction of Zulaykhā's entourage to her death. Jāmī writes,

3724. For every cry she gave on account of Yūsuf, They gave the same for her, with two hundred times the pain.	هر آن نوحه که بهر یوسف آن کرد همی‌کردن بر وی با دو صد درد

Her entourage recognizes that she could not bear the sorrow of separation from Yūsuf, and she had hoped to be reunited with him in death.

The passages that describe Zulaykhā's death, especially when paired with the passage describing her sorrow at Yūsuf's absence after he is freed from prison and becomes the vizier of Egypt's king, indicate that Zulaykhā consistently attaches herself to Yūsuf's form. She is unable to break free of her longing and desire for him in order to love God as her true object of love. Her destruction of the idol does not convey a transformation in her object of love. Indeed, her sole object remains Yūsuf. At no point does she express a desire to love God independently of loving Yūsuf.

2.5. The Best of All Lovers?

These passages that I have analyzed thus complicate the poet's own narration that Zulaykhā had apparently transcended her attachment to Yūsuf's form. There is one passage that appears to communicate this. It occurs in the poem after the two lovers have been united in marriage. Jāmī writes,

3564. But, on account of him, the veil was torn before Zulaykhā; A ray from the sun of truth shone [upon her]	ولی زو بر زلیخا پرده بشکافت ز خورشید حقیقت پرتوی تافت
3565. This sun so seized her That in it[s rays], Yūsuf was lost like a speck of dust.	چنان خورشید بر وی اشتلم کرد که یوسف را در او چون ذرّه گم کرد
3566. Though it is true that in the crucible of embodied love, She spent her life overcoming hindrances,	بلی در بوتهٔ عشق مجازی گذشتش عمر در مانع گدازی
3567. When the sun of truth rose, There were before her eyes no more hindrances.	چو خورشید حقیقت گشت طالع نبودش پیش دیده هیچ مانع
3568. The labors of truth fell upon her; She fled from all that did not accord with it.	کششهای حقیقت در وی آویخت ز هر چه آن ناگزیرش بود بگریخت

This passage seems to suggest that, after uniting with Yūsuf in marriage, Zulaykhā is no longer in thrall to her sensual desire for his physical form. Indeed, his physical form vanishes before her gaze like a mote in the sun's rays. This sun, the sun of truth (*ḥaqīqa*) is described as removing the obstacles that she had encountered during her period of *majāzī* love. In this passage, Jāmī seems to be applying the model of love from his prologue chapters directly to Zulaykhā's case. Zulaykhā has crossed the bridge of the *majāzī* to reach *al-ḥaqīqa*. Indeed, in this passage, the image the dust mote, or atom (*ẕarrih*) of Yūsuf's form vanishing before sun of truth creates a clear parallel with the earlier account of Bāzighih, who had crossed the bridge of her love for Yūsuf's form to worshiping God with no more regard for Yūsuf. Indeed, Bāzighih tells Yūsuf,

1746. You have lifted the veil from the face of my hope; From the atom (*ẕarrih*), you have shown me the path to the sun	حجاب از روی امّیدم گشودی ز ذرّه ره به خورشیدم نمودی

In both passages, the veil before the eyes of Yūsuf's admirer has been lifted. As explained in the preceding dissertation chapter, the beloved is a veil that obscures the fact of his divine origin. The uplifting of the veil could suggest the realization of God as the source of Yūsuf's beautiful form.

The key difference between Zulaykhā and Bāzighih, however, is that Zulakyhā never gives up Yūsuf's form. Despite the fact that Jāmī describes both Bāzighih and Zulaykhā as undergoing the same process of gazing at the truth directly due to their love of Yūsuf, both characters have different practical responses to this realization.

Why is it that Bāzighih can leave Yūsuf's form behind, while Zulaykhā cannot? Does Zulaykhā fail where Bāzighih had succeeded? Is it not the case that the goal of the path of love is to transcend attachment to form? Indeed, as I have already shown, in chapter 11 of the *maṯnavī*, Jāmī narrates that a Sufi master tells his disciple,

363. "However, it is necessary not to stay within form, But rather to quickly carry oneself over this bridge."	ولی باید که در صورت نمانی وز این پل زود خود را بگذرانی

It appears, based on evidence from her death scene, that Zulaykhā is apparently unable to "carry herself over the bridge" of "form." Nonetheless, Jāmī does not condemn, but rather celebrates, Zulaykhā for her fidelity to Yūsuf up until the end of her life. Indeed, at the end of the chapter of the *maṯnavī* that includes her death scene, Jāmī writes,

3742. Happy is the lover who died in separation so as to Bring their soul to the bridal chamber of the beloved.	خوش آن عاشق که در هجران چنین مرد به خلوتگاه جانان جان چنین برد
3743. No one could say that a man went to the grave With as much manly courage as this brave woman did.	نگوید کس که مردی به کفن رفت بدین مردانگی کان شیرزن رفت
3744. First, she tore her gaze away from all that was not her	نخست از غیر جانان دیده بر کند

beloved, Then she threw the coin of her soul upon the mound of his grave	وز آن پس نقد جان بر خاکش افکند
3745. May there be thousands of blessings upon her soul and body, And may the eye of her soul become clear through her beloved.	هزاران فیض بر جان و تنش باد به جانان دیدهٔ جان روشنش باد

In this passage, Jāmī describes Zulaykhā as a role model for others to follow. She is braver than any man, and she deserves thousands of blessings for her love. Here, as in the preceding passage that describes her death (lines 3721–3722), I interpret *jānān* to refer to Yūsuf, and not to God. In both of these passages, the context in which *jānān* occurs—following references to Yūsuf's grave—lends credence to this interpretation.

The laudatory tone of Jāmī's lines in this passage (lines 3742–3745) echoes a passage from the very start of the *maṣnavī*. Indeed, before the story begins, Jāmī describes Zulaykhā as being the best of all lovers. He writes,

410. There was no lover like Zulaykhā; In love she was greater than them all.	نبود از عاشقان کس چون زلیخا به عشق از جمله بود افزون زلیخا
411. From childhood to old age, she practiced/cultivated love As both a monarch and prisoner, she practiced/cultivated love	ز طفلی تا به پیری عشق ورزید به شاهی و اسیری عشق ورزید
412. Then, from old age and weakness and incapacity, When the time of youth was renewed again for her,	پس از پیری و عجز و ناتوانی چو بازش تازه شد عهد جوانی
413. The only path she traveled was that of loyalty and love; On it she grew; on it she lived; on it she died.	به جز راه وفا و عشق نسپرد بر آن زاد و بر آن بود و بر آن مرد

It appears to be the case that Zulaykhā's status as the best of lovers is not nullified by the fact that she remains attached to Yūsuf until she dies, unlike Bāzighih, who leaves Yūsuf behind and concerns herself entirely with worshipping God, the source of Yūsuf's beauty.

I suggest that Zulaykhā's status as the best of all lovers results not from the object of her love, but from the quality of her love. Indeed, Zulaykhā and Bāzighih, despite appearances to the contrary, ultimately have the same object, as I will explain below. Jāmī seems to suggest both of these points. Regarding the former, that Zulaykhā is the best of lovers due to the quality and intensity of her loving, Jāmī explicitly praises the sincerity and devotion she exhibits in her love. At the very start of the chapter in which Jāmī describes Zulaykhā witnessing the "sun of truth," which causes Yūsuf to disappear like an atom or dust mote, he writes of Zulaykhā,

3545. That person who sets for on the path of love in sincerity, At the end, earns the name of "beloved"	به صدق آن کس که زد در عاشقی گام به معشوقی برآید آخرش نام
3546. Which sincere person comes on the path of love Who is not crowned with being the beloved of their lover?	که آمد در طریق عشق صادق که نامد بر سرش معشوق عاشق
3547. Zulaykhā possessed so much sincerity in love That, from beginning to end, she spent her whole life in love.	زلیخا را چه صدقی بود در عشق که یکسر عمر خود فرسود در عشق

Zulaykhā's sincerity in love was ultimately directed at Yūsuf. Indeed, Jāmī goes on to characterize the entire arc of her life as shaped and directed by her longing for him. He writes,

3552. In that dream that she saw, fortunately, She was captured by the trap of Yūsuf's love	در آن خوابی که دید از بخت بیدار به دام عشق یوسف شد گرفتار
3553. She expelled desire for her own kingdom from her heart; She made the intention to travel to the kingdom of Egypt	هوای ملک خود از دل بدر کرد به ملک مصر آهنگ سفر کرد
3554. From her own city, she arrived at Yūsuf's— Not for her own sake, but for Yūsuf's sake, she came.	از شهر خود به شهر یوسف آمد نه بهر خود ز بهر یوسف آمد
3555. She spent her youth with his image in her head,	جوانی در خیال او به سر برد

With the hope of uniting with him in her head.	به امّید وصال او به سر برد
3556. In old age, she began to wish for him— In blindness, she was unable to see him.	به پیری تمنّای وی افتاد به کوری بی تماشای وی افتاد
3557. Then, after old age, when she became young and could see again, She fell in love with the face of that soul and world	پس از پیری که بینا و جوان شد به مهر روی آن جان و جهان شد
3558. And after that, she spent her life desiring him; With the bond of loyalty to him in her heart, she lived.	وز آن پس در هوایش زیست تا زیست به دل قید وفایش زیست تا زیست
3559. When her sincerity exceeded its limits, It, at last, made its home in Yūsuf.	چو صدقش بود بیرون از نهایت در آخر کرد در یوسف سرایت

These lines demonstrate the centrality of *ṣidq*, or sincerity, and *vafā*, or faithfulness, to Zulaykhā's love for Yūsuf. One might argue that her refusal to give up her object of love, Yūsuf, up until the moment of her death, exemplifies these values of sincerity and fidelity. Indeed, as already shown, during her death scene, she blames Yūsuf for his faithlessness to her. Him dying, and thus causing her to be alone in the world without him, violates the expectation of faithfulness that lovers are expected to uphold (line 3697, discussed above).

One could argue that Zulaykhā, the best of lovers, surpasses Bāzighih because the latter, in a sense, gives up her object of love. Bāzighih's love for Yūsuf evaporates as soon as Yūsuf explains to her that God, the creator of his beauty, should be the true object of her adoration. Zulaykhā, though she has the same realization, nonetheless does not abandon her love for her human beloved.

In a deeper sense, however, one could argue that Zulaykhā and Bāzighih have the same ultimate object of love—God. Recall that, according to the Akbarian cosmological scheme discussed in the preceding dissertation chapter, God is the creator of all beauty in the world in the sense that all the forms of the world are (self-)manifestations of God. For Ibn ʿArabī and his

followers, God does not, or does not only, transcend creation. Though God's essence is unique and unknowable, God's names and attributes (*asmāʾ* and *ṣifāt*) manifest themselves in the world as the world itself. The world—all of creation—is not other than the manifestation of God's names and attributes. Yūsuf, as one of God's creations, is a manifestation of God. Therefore, Zulaykhā's love for Yūsuf already entails her love for God.

There are several hints in the poem itself that lend credibility to this reading. The first is the metaphor of the sun. In both the passage in which Bāzighih encounters Yūsuf and the passage above concerning Zulaykhā's experience of love (lines 3564–3568), Jāmī describes Yūsuf's form as a dust mote that disappears in the rays of the sun of truth. The sun of truth can be taken as a reference to God, or to the fact of God as the reality behind all visible, transient forms. However, Jāmī also uses the image of the sun to describe Yūsuf. As I have discussed above, in his account of Yūsuf's creation by God, Jāmī describes Yūsuf as a sun that outshines the beauty of all the rest of God's creation (lines 428–430). Returning to that passage, one notices that Yūsuf is the sun not only because he is exceedingly beautiful, but also because his beauty *manifests the truth*. For this reason, all the prophets and holy men who witness Yūsuf's creation during the time of the primordial covenant, glorify God and testify to God's oneness upon witnessing Yūsuf's beauty. Jāmī writes,

435. Each of the prophets, in front and behind, Elevated beyond the shadows of embodiment,[179]	همه پیغمبران از پیش و از پس ز ظلمتهای جسمانی مقدّس

[179] I interpret this as a reference to the fact that, in Jāmī's version of the event of the primordial covenant, God is addressing the souls of Adam and his progeny before the creation of the physical world. Therefore, in this moment, the prophets do not have physical bodies. However, I suggest that they nonetheless possess distinguishable and perceivable forms. For example, Yūsuf, as well as Adam, are distinguished from the other prophets. Indeed, the two of them interact with one another and embrace each other (lines 438–451).

436. All the blessed souls, complete and perfect, Drew up their banners, left and right,	همه ارواح قدسی بی کام و کاست علمها بر کشیده از چپ و راست
437. To this prayer niche, the candle of which was the sun, Let out cries of "Glory be to God," and "there is no god but God"	درین محرابی خورشید قندیل فکنده غلغل تسبیح و تهلیل

Jāmī describes Yūsuf in this scene as a sun within a prayer niche—he is an object of worship and adoration. Yūsuf the sun causes the prophets who witness him to glorify God and affirm that there is no God but God. Indeed, Jāmī uses the image of the sun consistently when referring to Yūsuf's beauty throughout the poem. For example, in the title to the sixteenth chapter, in which Zulaykhā first sees Yūsuf, Jāmī describes her as witnessing "the sword of the sun of Yūsuf's beauty" (*tīgh-i āftāb-i jamāl-i Yūsuf*).[180] Furthermore, during the scene in which Yūsuf is displayed before the people of the Egypt during the slave auction, the slave trader who had found him refers to him as the sun, and the people of Egypt perceive him to be the actual sun, believing the actual sun to have either vanished or been transported to the dais upon which Yūsuf is standing (lines 1583–1590).

In other words, Yūsuf is already the "sun of truth." When Jāmī describes Yūsuf as a dust mote that vanishes in the sun's rays, it is not the case that Yūsuf is no longer visible, that the form has vanished and only the divine meaning of the form is visible. Rather, Yūsuf becomes visible in a new way, at least to Zulaykhā if not to Bāzighih, as not just simply God's creation (a fact which Zulaykhā had already known), but indeed as a manifestation of God. Zulaykhā's love for Yūsuf already contains within it her love for God, which Yūsuf manifests.

[180] Jāmī, *YZ*, 48.

Another piece of evidence that supports the reading that Zulaykhā's love for Yūsuf had already contained her love for God is the scene in which she destroys her idol, discussed above. Recall that she tells God that the source of idol worship is the love that God implants for the idol in the idol-worshipper's heart. She says that the idol reflects God, which is why anyone would worship it (lines 3396–3397). These lines echo lines from the prologue chapter, in which Jāmī writes that whenever anyone loves anyone else or anything, they are really loving God: "The heart that loves desirable beauties— / Whether it knows it or not—loves God" (line 337). Zulaykhā describes her love for Yūsuf similarly to how she describes her love for the idol: both were placed in her by God.[181] God made both the idol and Yūsuf beautiful in the eyes of Zulaykhā. This is because both are ultimately manifestations of God's beauty.

2.6. Chapter Conclusion

In sum, Bāzighih does not surpass Zulaykhā because she seemingly crosses the bridge from *al-majāz* to *al-ḥaqīqa*. Rather, one might say that Zulaykhā, standing on the bridge (*qanṭara*) of *al-majāz*, comes to realize that there is no distinction between *al-majāz* and *al-ḥaqīqa*. Instead of traveling from a point of origin to a destination, she realizes that where she is standing is already the destination. The bridge of "the metaphorical / embodied" is itself already "the real." It is her fidelity to Yūsuf that has shown her this. As Jāmī says in the conclusion of the chapter in which he describes her death, "And may the eye of her soul become clear through her beloved" (line 3745).

Given that Zulaykhā and Bāzighih ultimately have the same object of love, Zulaykhā's status as the best of all lovers results from her sincerity and faithfulness. As I have shown in this

[181] See lines 787 and 793, discussed above.

dissertation chapter, Jāmī characterizes Zulaykhā as consistent in her love for Yūsuf throughout her life. Her attachment to his form is not changed by her supposed conversion scene, in which she destroys the idol she worships because it had failed to reunite her with Yūsuf. Due to her consistent love for Yūsuf (specifically his form), coupled with her consistent knowledge of God as the creator of Yūsuf's form and the source of her love, I have argued that Zulaykhā does not undergo a fundamental transformation over the course of the story. This differs from the model Jāmī outlines in his prologue chapters, which is best exemplified by Bāzighih's story. Instead of leaving behind her attachment to Yūsuf, she comes to realize that her love of Yūsuf, like her love for her idol, already includes and entails her love for God. It is this realization, exemplified by her utter devotion to Yūsuf, that makes her the best of all lovers.

If she does undergo a transformation, it is that she becomes Yūsuf's beloved, as Jāmī notes in a line already quoted above (line 3545). This has a number of implications, which I will elaborate in the following chapters. In a basic sense, Zulaykhā becoming Yūsuf's beloved means that he has become her lover. Indeed, I would suggest that Yūsuf's character arc in the story involves a greater degree of transformation than Zulaykhā's. This is the subject of the following chapter, the penultimate chapter of this dissertation.

However, Zulaykhā becoming Yūsuf's beloved, along with Yūsuf becoming her lover, imply that the identities of lover and beloved are not static but fluid. This is because both lover and beloved are ultimately manifestations of God. Indeed, in the final chapter of the dissertation, I suggest that, for Jāmī, true, faithful love involves a loss of identity, a dissolution of the self that resembles the Sufi concept of *fanā'*. Both Zulaykhā and Yūsuf, in being lovers, lose themselves.

2.7. Postscript: The Akbarian Basis of Zulaykhā's Idolatry

My argument that the scene in which Zulaykhā destroys the idol does *not* symbolize a transformation nor a transfer of her devotion from an unworthy object (whether her literal idol or, as scholars such as Shaw, Hodgkin, and others have argued, Yūsuf) can be explained by Ibn ʿArabī's discussion of idol worship in the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, and Jāmī's commentary on these passages by Ibn ʿArabī. As Nair explains,

> In the Aaron (Hārūn) chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*, [Ibn ʿArabī] stated that God allowed the Israelites to worship the Golden Calf and the Meccans to worship the idols of the Kaʿba because God is worshipped in every form (stars, stones, trees, animals). In worshipping the idols, they were worshipping Him. Finally, in the Noah (Nūḥ) chapter, Ibn ʿArabī claimed that Noah's idolatrous people were correct in opposing the prophet's one-sided call to the transcendent God.[182]

Jāmī commented on Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ* in two ways. Firstly, in 863 AH (1458–59 CE), he authored his *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ naqsh al-fuṣūṣ*, which was his commentary on Ibn ʿArabī's abridgment of the *Fuṣūṣ*.[183] In the chapter on Hārūn (Aaron) in the abridgement, *Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ*, Ibn ʿArabī makes no mention of the issue of idolatry and instead limits himself to a discussion of Hārūn's status as a prophet alongside his brother, the Prophet Mūsā (Moses).[184] Jāmī did have another opportunity to engage with the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* in 896 AH (1490–1491), when he wrote a full commentary on the entirety of the *Fuṣūṣ*, titled *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. While this later commentary, written after he wrote *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*, primarily elucidates complicated points of grammar and syntax, Jāmī nonetheless periodically offers digressions to elucidate

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[182] Nair, *Interpreting Ibn ʿArabī*, 4–5.

[183] Feuillebois-Pierunek, "Jāmī's *Sharḥ-i rubāʿiyyāt*," 343. As stated above, the *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, written in both Persian and Arabic, draws heavily from past commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ*.

[184] See Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 264–267.

difficult passages, including some of the passages on idolatry in the *Fuṣūṣ* in both the Nūḥ and the Hārūn chapters.[185] However in his *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, Jāmī comments extensively on the central issue of the chapter on Nūḥ that pertains to the issue of idolatry: the question of God's simultaneous "incomparability (*tanzīh*)" and "similarity (tashbīh)."[186] For the purposes of my analysis, I will focus primarily on Jāmī's *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ* because it predates *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*, and because it offers a fuller presentation of Jāmī's understanding of Ibn ʿArabī's views on idolatry. I will nonetheless make references to *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* to supplement evidence from the *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*. I suggest that Jāmī's commentaries on Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣuṣ* and its abridgement helps to explain why Zulaykhā's idolatry is justifiable. Her worship does not need to be redirected to God because her worship of the idol is already directed at God.

Jāmī asserts at the outset of his commentary on Nūḥ's chapter in his *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ* that anyone who insists that God is incomparable to the created world incorrectly places a limit on God (*taḥdīd*)—indeed the two are the same ("*fa-yakūn al-tanzīh ʿayn al-taḥdīd*").[187] Similarly, insisting that God is fundamentally similar to the world without simultaneously insisting on God's incomparability to creation is also a form of limiting God. The true *ʿārif*, the one who possesses correct knowledge, is one who describes God as being both incomparable to the world

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[185] I therefore disagree with Feuillebois-Pierunek's assessment of this commentary. In it, she writes that Jāmī "confines himself to elucidating the immediate meaning of each sentence in the original text and shuns any theoretical digressions." Feuillebois-Pierunek, "Jāmī's *Sharḥ-i rubāʿiyyāt*," 343.

[186] For an analysis of how commentators after Jāmī, namely Shaykh- i Makkī Kāzarūnī (d. 926/1519– 1520) and ʿAbd al- Rasūl Barzinjī (d. 1103/ 1691), treated this issue, see Nair, *Interpreting Ibn ʿArabī*, 73–87. On these authors, see Nair, *Interpreting Ibn ʿArabī*, 3.

[187] Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 126–127, quotation at 127.

and as similar to it.[188] Jāmī explains this seeming contradiction in a way that aligns with what he states in the introductory chapters of *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*, discussed above: while God's essence is transcendent and unknowable, God is nonetheless manifest in the perceivable forms of the created world. Jāmī writes that tashbīh corresponds to God's "manifestation in the mirrors of created beings, and God's appearance in the guise of shapes and colors (*ẓuhūr-i ū dar mirāʾī-i akvān va namūd-i ū dar malābis-i ashkāl va alvān*)."[189] Using the metaphor of the mirror to represent God's locus of manifestation in the world parallels Jāmī's use of the same metaphor to describe Beauty's (i.e., God's) appearance in the world in the opening sections of *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*. Jāmī goes on to explain that God's manifestation in the world was God's own wish and intention by citing Ibn Ibn ʿArabī's quotation of the famous *ḥadīth qudsī*, "I was a hidden treasure and I wanted (or loved) to be known, so I created the world."[190] This *ḥadīth qudsī*, indeed, most likely underlies Jāmī's claim in the prologue of this *maṯnavī* that Beauty could not stay hidden but needed to manifest itself.

Jāmī builds on these points by explaining that God describes Godself in the Qurʾān in ways that are similar to created beings. Specifically, God describes Godself as "the One Who Hears, the One Who Sees (*al-samīʿ al-baṣīr*)."[191] Jāmī goes on to explain that what this really means is that God is the *only one* who sees and hears: "*innahu lā samīʿ wa-lā baṣīr fī al-ḥaqīqa*

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[188] Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 127–128.

[189] Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 128.

[190] Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 129. Jāmī acknowledges both variants, "I wanted" and "I loved."

[191] Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 130, quoting Qurʾān, Sūrat al-Isrāʾ (17): 1.

illā huwa."[192] This aligns with the Akbarian theory of creation, discussed above in Chapter 1, according to which the created world is nothing other than God's manifestation of God's attributes. Jāmī continues by reiterating that the one who possesses correct knowledge recognizes God as both similar to the world (because the world is nothing other than God) and that God is incomparable to it (because God's essence is transcendent, unknowable, and non-manifest without the mediation of the Divine Names and Attributes), and that this is the plain meaning of what God's messengers have taught.[193] Jāmī emphasizes the correctness of *tashbīh*, of God being similar to world, by arguing that if God had intended to remain completely transcendent and unknowable, God would not have sent messengers with their books or their laws, or manifested miracles, or shown other signs so that people would know God.[194]

What this has to do with idolatry is that the idol, like the entire rest of creation, is a locus for God's self-manifestation. Ibn ʿArabī states this directly in the unabridged text of the *Fuṣūṣ*'s chapter on Nūḥ, writing, "Nothing besides God has been worshipped in every object of worship (*fa-mā ʿubida ghayr Allāh fī kull maʿbūd*)."[195] In his commentary, Jāmī interprets this sentence to mean that God, the True Object of Worship (*al-maʿbūd al-ḥaqq*) is "the one who is manifest in every object of worship, or rather in every existing being, even if the worshippers are unaware of

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[192] Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 131.

[193] Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 132.

[194] Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 133.

[195] Quoted in Jāmī, *Sharḥ al-Jāmī ʿalā fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 133.

this (*huwa al-ẓāhir fī kull maʿbūd bal kull mawjūd wa-in lam yashʿur bi-dhālika*)."[196] This aligns with Zulaykhā's declaration to her idol that, in worshipping it, she was always only worshipping God. The idol, like all of God's creation, is a manifestation of God. Indeed, Jāmī agrees with Ibn ʿArabī censure of those who worship idols to get closer to God.[197] Ibn ʿArabī writes that the one who possesses the highest knowledge knows, quoting Qurʾān, Sūrat al-Ḥajj (22): 34: "Your God is one, so submit to Him."[198] Ibn ʿArabī appends to this line the phrase, "wherever He is manifest" (*ḥaythu ẓahara*), and Jāmī agrees with this, though he qualifies this by stating that these loci of manifestation are not worshipped for their own sake.[199] Rather, according to Jāmī, the one who knows the truth "makes the Absolute God a direction for their worship (*fa-yajʿalu al-ilāh al-muṭlaq qiblah li-l-ʿibāda*)."[200] This accords with Zulaykhā's statement that she never worshiped the idol for its own sake, but only because God's own reflection in the idol made it attractive as an object of worship. Furthermore, Ibn ʿArabī's (and Jāmī's) censure of those who worship idols to get closer to God, without recognizing that God is already manifest in the idol, seems to go against the dominant understanding of the poem, in which Zulaykhā supposedly loves Yūsuf in order to get closer to God. The logic of both thinkers is that if one believes that there are actually entities other than God that one can worship in order to get closer to God, that

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[196] Jāmī, *Sharḥ al-Jāmī ʿalā fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 133.

[197] Ibn ʿArabī quotes Qurʾān, Sūrat al-Zumar (39): 3: "We only worship them because they bring us nearer to God." Jāmī, *Sharḥ al-Jāmī ʿalā fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 134.

[198] Quoted in Jāmī, *Sharḥ al-Jāmī ʿalā fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 134.

[199] Jāmī, *Sharḥ al-Jāmī ʿalā fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 134.

[200] Jāmī, *Sharḥ al-Jāmī ʿalā fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 134.

is the real idolatry. As I have argued, she never gives up her love for Yūsuf nor does she redirect it to a different object because she does not have to—there is nowhere else for her to direct it. Yūsuf is already a locus of manifestation for God, so her love for Yūsuf is nothing other than her love for God, just as her worship for the idol is nothing other than her worship of God.

Another way in which Zulaykhā's worship of the idol is linked to her love of Yūsuf is that, for Ibn ʿArabī as well as Jāmī, desire is the ultimate cause of worship. In the chapter on Hārūn in the *Fuṣūṣ*, Ibn ʿArabī says that "the greatest and most highest locus of manifestation in which God is worshipped is 'desire' (*wa-aʿẓam majlā ʿubida fīhi wa-aʿlāhū al-hawā*)."[201] In his commentary on this passage, Jāmī explains that this desire is the very same as the desire expressed in the *ḥadīth qudsī* discussed above, which Jāmī quoted in his earlier commentary on the abridgment of the *Fuṣūṣ*: "I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known." In other words, humans' desire to worship God's manifestations (including idols) is none other than God's own desire to be known.[202] This desire is the result of God's own beauty as it is manifest in these outward forms.[203]

For this reason, abandonment of idols can lead to the abandonment of worshipping God. Ibn Arabī writes, in his chapter on Nūḥ in his *Fuṣūṣ*, that if Nūḥ's people had abandoned their false gods, "they would have become ignorant of the God-the-Real, to the extent that they abandoned them, because God has a face in every existing thing (*fa-innahum idhā tarakūhum*

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[201] Quoted in Jāmī, *Sharḥ al-Jāmī ʿalā fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 366.

[202] Jāmī, *Sharḥ al-Jāmī ʿalā fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 366.

[203] Jāmī, *Sharḥ al-Jāmī ʿalā fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 366.

jahilū min al-ḥaqq ʿalā qadr mā tarakū min hāʾulāʾ fa-innahu li-l-ḥaqq fī kull mawjūd wajhan)."[204] While Jāmī does not directly comment on this passage, his argument in his commentary on both the *Fuṣūṣ* and its abridgment, that one must not abandon *tashbīh* for the sake of *tanzīh*, and vice versa, seems to explain the meaning behind this passage. At the end of his commentary on the chapter on Nūḥ in his *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, Jāmī reiterates that God's essence (*ẕāt*) can never be known or perceived, though "the world is the image of God-the-Real (*al-ʿālim ṣūrat al-ḥaqq*)" and "the presence of God-the-Real is manifest in every object of understanding and perception (*ḥażrat-i ḥaqq subḥānahu va taʿālā mutajallī va ẓāhir ast dar har mafhūm va mudrak*)."[205] This is why *tashbīh* is necessary: without it, God would be unknowable.[206] Abandoning *tashbīh*, which is idolatry in the case of Nūḥ's people, would result in abandoning any knowledge of God.

Based on the foregoing evidence, Jāmī's understanding of Ibn Arabī's views on idolatry explain why Zulaykhā's idolatry does not represent an error in need of correction but rather a form of true worship. Therefore, her destruction of her idol does not represent a conversion from false belief to true belief, nor a redirection of her devotion from one object to another. Her worship of the idol already entailed worship of God, as God is manifest and worshipped in all forms, and God can only be known in perceivable forms. Her destruction of her idol can also not be taken as symbolizing her transference of her love from Yūsuf to God as two distinct objects.

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[204] Quoted in Jāmī, *Sharḥ al-Jāmī ʿalā fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 132.

[205] Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 136.

[206] As Nair puts it, summarizing Ibn ʿArabī's view, which Jāmī shares, "Since the Essence is unknowable, human beings come to know God only through the Names and Attributes." Nair, *Interpreting Ibn ʿArabī*, 69.

Yūsuf, like the idol, is a manifestation of God. Her love for him already includes within it her love for God. Indeed, her inability to give up loving Yūsuf after he dies not only shows that she never abandoned his human form as an object of worship, but it also parallels the inability of Nūḥ's people to give up their idols. Because God can only be known through sensible forms, abandoning the form constitutes abandoning knowledge of God.

While the preceding discussion has focused primarily on Zulaykhā's worship of God, love and worship are, of course, not exactly the same. In the following chapter, I will build on this discussion by explaining how Yūsuf becomes a lover. I will argue that Yūsuf's transformation supports the notion that human love is necessary for loving God. Just as God cannot be understood outside of God's manifestation in sensible forms, God cannot be loved in the absence of loving a human form.

Chapter 3: Yūsuf as Zulaykhā's Lover, and Zulaykhā as His Beloved

3.1. Chapter Introduction

So far, I have argued that Zulaykhā's narrative arc as Yūsuf's lover differs from the normative Sufi tradition, emblematized by ʿIrāqī's *Lamaʿāt*, according to which the lover must recognize their human beloved as an instantiation of God's Beauty, and thereby redirect their human love toward loving God. As I have shown, Zulaykhā never abandons her love for Yūsuf, even at the story's conclusion, and she arguably always knew him to be a manifestation of God's beauty. Her character does not undergo a fundamental transformation by the story's conclusion. Her love for Yūsuf had always contained within it love for God, and his form thus remains her primary object of love because of this fact. This complicates the historically prevalent tradition of reading the *maṯnavī* as an allegory for the Sufi seeker's path to God that involves crossing the bridge of *al-majāz* to reach *al-ḥaqīqa*.

In this chapter, I further complicate this dominant allegorical reading by demonstrating how Yūsuf is not simply Zulaykhā's object of love, but indeed her lover. His role as her lover is the result of an affective and cognitive development, during which he comes to acknowledge, recognize, and act on his physical desire for Zulaykhā. Far from a chaste prophet who lacks sensual lust, Yūsuf reveals himself to be subject to the same human drives as Zulaykhā. His transformation into her lover strengthens my reading of the poem as a whole. I contend that Jāmī does not see human, embodied love as inferior to disembodied love for God. By portraying Yūsuf's transformation into a lover as a positive development, one that enables the two protagonists' reunion and marriage at the story's conclusion, Jāmī seems not to denigrate human love, nor see it as a mere stepping-stone to divine love. Rather, human love can, and should,

coexist in the lover and beloved's hearts with love for God. Indeed, Yūsuf's development into becoming a lover might signify the necessity of human love for the one who seeks God.

In section 3.2, I provide an analysis of Jāmī's head-to-foot description of Zulaykhā's beauty, which takes up the entirety of the fifteenth chapter of the *maṯnavī*.[207] This scene, which describes her beauty in minute detail and compares parts of her body to the alphabet, seems to suggest that her beauty, like Yūsuf's, can be read as a sign of divine beauty. Furthermore, Jāmī's use of celestial and paradisiacal imagery in describing Zulaykhā sets the stage for the central seduction scene of the story, which I argue can be read as Zulaykhā leading Yūsuf on a heavenly ascent akin to the Prophet Muḥammad's night journey to heaven, or *miʿrāj*.

In sections 3.3 to 3.5, I discuss this very seduction scene, in which Zulaykhā leads Yūsuf through a beautiful seven-chambered palace which she has commissioned solely for the purpose of seducing him. I argue that this scene can be read productively alongside two episodes in Niẓāmī Ganjavī's (d. 1209 CE) *Haft paykar*, and that this parallel reading allows one to read this seduction scene as symbolizing a spiritual ascent for Yūsuf. My reading of this scene alongside portions of *Haft paykar* bucks the dominant trend of reading Jāmī's poem as a response to Niẓāmī's *Khusraw va Shīrīn*.[208] I argue that Zulaykhā plays the role of guide to Yūsuf, catalyzing his sensual desire for her.

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[207] Jāmī, *YZ*, 44–48.

[208] As I note below, Jāmī explicitly frames his *Yūsuf ū Zulaykhā* as a response to Niẓāmī's *Khusraw va Shīrīn* in one of the *maṯnavī's* introductory chapters. I am not the only one to have noticed this intertextuality between *Yūsuf ū Zulaykhā* and *Haft paykar*. See Hodgkin, "*Ṣanam*," 716.

Though this final seduction attempt of hers fails to unite her with Yūsuf, it sets the stage for the couple's eventual marriage. In section 3.6, I revisit the *maṯnavī*'s conclusion, in which Yūsuf re-enacts Zulaykhā's seduction attempt by building a beautiful palace for her and tearing her garment.[209] This illustrates his transformation from beloved to lover. I conclude this chapter by revisiting Yūsuf's death in light of his having been transformed into Zulaykhā's lover. I argue that, despite his transformation into a lover, Zulaykhā surpasses him in her ability to love.

3.2. Zulaykhā as Beloved: A Lesson for Yūsuf to Learn

As discussed in the previous chapter, Zulaykhā earns the title "beloved" (*maʿshūq*) by the story's end, due to her fidelity to Yūsuf as her object of love. However, her lovability, or worthiness as an object of love, is indicated by Jāmī from the moment of her introduction in the *maṯnavī*. Indeed, Jāmī devotes an entire chapter to describing her beauty, focusing on each of her body parts in succession, from head to foot. This head-to-foot description evokes descriptions of the beloved found in earlier *maṯnavī*s, such as Niẓāmī's *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, which includes an extended description of the beauty of each of Shīrīn's body parts.[210] This parallel between Zulaykhā's and Shīrīn's descriptions signals Zulaykhā's role as not just lover but also a potential

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[209] Zulaykhā's tearing of Yūsuf's garment as he flees from her during her final attempt to seduce him is a key moment in the Quranic version of the story (Q 12:25–28). It has been included in other narrative retellings of Yūsuf and Zulaykhā's story and has been the subject of a number of premodern Persianate and Islamicate miniature paintings. One notable example is by the Timurid-era painter Bihzād (d. 1535 CE), which included in an illustrated manuscript of Saʿdī's (d. 1291 or 1292 CE) *Bustān* (referred to by art historians as the "Cairo *Bustān*"). For an analysis of this painting and a summary of recent scholarship on it, see Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art?*, 250–253.

[210] For an analysis of this passage, see Orsatti, "*Khosrow and Shirin* and the Poems of Love and Adventure," 168–172. The fact that Khusraw falls in love with Shirin due to a verbal description of her provided by his courtier, Shāpūr, finds an echo in Bāzighih's falling in love with Yūsuf on the basis of hearing descriptions of his beauty, discussed in the preceding dissertation chapter.

beloved, for Shīrīn, according to Orsatti, predominantly adopts the role of love object in Niẓāmī's poem.[211]

Jāmī's description includes two notable features that contextualize the climactic seduction scene of the poem. The first of these is a series of comparisons between features of Zulaykhā's face and letters of the alphabet. Such a comparison is absent from Niẓāmī's description of Shīrīn in his earlier poem. These alphabet comparisons occur close together, across a series of six lines. Jāmī writes,

533. Heaven gave a lesson in her beauty— Out of her forehead, it made a silver tablet.	فلک درس جمالش کرده تلقین نهاده از جبینش لوح سیمین
534. On the sides of her silver tablet appeared Two inverted letter nūns rubbed with musk	ز طرف لوح سیمینش نموده دو نون سر نگون از مشک شده
535. Beneath those two *nūn*s were—surprise—two letter *ṣād*s Which the pen of the craftwork of the Master had written	به زیر آن دو نون طرفه دو صادش نوشته کلک صنع اوستادش
536. From the edge of her *nūn* to the ring of the letter *mīm* An *alif*-like silver nose was drawn	ز حد نون تا حلقهٔ میم الف‌واری کشیده بینی از سیم
537. In addition to the *alif*, the *zero* of her mouth Was one that tenfold multiplied the tumult of the world	فزوده بر آلف صفر دهان را یکی ده کرده آشوب جهان را
538. Her *sīn* became visible from her laughing ruby The knot of her *mīm* opened to her teeth[212]	شده سینش عیان از لعل خندان گشاده میم را عقده به دندان

[211] Orsatti, "*Khosrow and Shirin*," 160–161. Jāmī himself echoes this view in lines 331–333, discussed in chapter 1 of this dissertation. In that passage, insofar as the pairs of lovers can be said to occupy positions of lover and beloved, Jāmī puts Yūsuf, Laylī, and Shīrīn in one category (i.e., beloveds) and Zulaykhā, Majnūn, and Khusraw and Farhād in another (i.e., lovers).

[212] Jāmī, *YZ*, 45.

Jāmī's close attention to Zulaykhā's face singles it out as a privileged site for the glimpsing of divine beauty. This is true of the face of other human beloveds as well. As discussed in chapter 1 of this dissertation, in the prologue chapters of the *maṯnavī*, Jāmī himself says that Laylī adorned her own face with God's Beauty's face (line 331). Jāmī also notes that the Beloved (God) shows its face in the mirrors of the world (line 323).[213] Thus, the face is specifically a site where beauty can be witnessed. This is also apparent in Jāmī's descriptions of Yūsuf's beauty. For example, in his account of Yūsuf's creation by God, Jāmī narrates that God tells Adam,

444. "On account of so much beauty that is visible on his [i.e. Yūsuf's] face, He stirs up the envy of the world's beauties.	ز بس خوبی که در رویش عیان است حسد انگیز خوبان جهان است

Zulaykhā, like Yūsuf, possesses a beautiful face that signals God as the origin of all beauty. Indeed, God is the *ustād* mentioned in line 535, the master whose craft is visible on Zulaykhā's face. Zulaykhā's beauty is not just a reflection of God's skillful creation of a beautiful form but is also a reflection and manifestation of the very beauty God possesses. This line creates a further parallel between her and Yūsuf. Recall that Yūsuf tells Bāzighih that "'I am the craftwork (*ṣanʿat*) of that Maker / From whose ocean one drop satisfies me'" (line 1729). Both Yūsuf and Zulaykhā are described by Jāmī as the creations of God's craftsmanship, *ṣunʿ* or *ṣanʿat*. Their beauty is a sign pointing to the beauty of their creator.

Zulaykhā's beauty serving as a sign of God's beauty is further expressed in these comparisons between Zulaykhā's facial features and the letters of the alphabet. This suggests that

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[213] As already noted in chapter 1, ʿIrāqī also privileges the human face as the site where God's beauty is manifest. Iraqī, *Lamaʿāt*, 69–70.

her physical form, like Yūsuf's, is a form (*ṣūra*) that conveys that meaning (*maʿnā*). Just as letters are not merely shapes but signify sounds and words, Zulaykhā's face signifies something other than itself. One might detect in these lines echoes of Ḥurūfism, the Sufi movement founded by Faḍlallāh Astarābādī (d. 1394 CE), members of which believed that God's creation of the world consisted in a single divine Word that was then divided into the twenty-eight or thirty-two phonemes of the Arabic and Persian alphabets, and that the human form, particularly the human face, manifests these letters and thus the totality of the the Divine Word.[214] Though Ḥurūfis were persecuted by the Timurid sultans, their ideas became influential to later authors.[215] For example, Wendy Shaw points to Sirāj al-Shīrāzī's *Tuḥfat al-Muḥibbīn*, composed in 1454, which includes a similar description of a beloved's beautiful face: the teeth are the letter *sīn*, and the mouth is the letter *mīm*, for example.[216]

An additional significant feature of this passage is Jāmī's image of heaven's (*falak*) act of teaching a lesson about Zulaykhā's love by turning her forehead into a tablet (*lawḥ*) upon which letters are written. This calls to mind Jāmī's admonishment to his reader regarding the necessity of the path of love from chapter 11 of the *maṯnavī*, discussed above. I reproduce those lines below:

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[214] Mir-Kasimov Orkhan, *Words of Power: Ḥurūfī Teachings between Shiʿism and Sufism in Medieval Islam: The Original Doctrine of Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī* (I.B. Tauris, 2015), 45–110.

[215] For a historical overview of the first few decades of the Ḥurūfī movement in greater Iran, see Fatih Usluer, "Ḥurūfism after Faḍl Allāh's Execution: Revisiting *Ṣaḥīfat al-Istikhlāṣ*," in *The Renaissance of Shiʿi Islam: Facets of Thought and Practice*, ed. Farhad Daftary and Janis Esots (I.B. Tauris, 2022), 115–130.

[216] Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art?*, 243. Shaw is drawing from the work of Carl Ernst. See Carl W. Ernst, "Sufism and the Aesthetics of Penmanship in Sirāj al-Shīrāzī's *Tuḥfat al-Muḥibbīn* (1454)," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 129, no. 3 (2009): 431–442, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20789420.

357. In this world, even if you try a hundred things, Only love gives you freedom from yourself.	به گیتی گر چه صد کار آزمایی همین عشقت دهد از خود رهایی
358. Do not turn from love. Go, though you yourself are metaphorical; Because for the sake of the truth, that is skillful.	متاب از عشق رو گر خود مجازیست که آن بهر حقیقی کارسازیست
359. As long as you have not read "ABC" on the first tablet, How would you be able to study the Qurʾān?	به لوح اول «الف بی» تا نخوانی ز قرآن درس خواندن کی توانی

In this analogy, love for a human beloved is like practicing one's letters on a tablet (*lawḥ*), this is the first step toward eventually being able to read the Qurʾān, which represents reaching proximity to, or knowledge of, God. Though I have rejected the notion of human love as simply a pathway to love for God in Zulaykhā's character arc, I will apply this notion to Yūsuf's case. Zulaykhā does not undergo a major transformation, but Yūsuf does. Yūsuf needs to be taught the centrality of human love to a full experience of love for the divine, as the entire cosmos, including the human form, is none other than God's manifestation. Zulaykhā's beautiful face is the instructional tablet that Yūsuf will rely on to learn the alphabet of the language of love.

Zulaykhā's instruction of Yūsuf will take the form of leading him on a spiritual ascent. This fact is already signified in this passage, in which Jāmī says it was heaven that had turned Zulaykhā's face into a tablet. Jāmī's head-to-foot description of Zulaykhā in the rest of the chapter also include celestial and paradisiacal imagery, indicating that Zulaykhā's beauty will redirect Yūsuf's gaze from the earthly to the heavenly, and ultimately, to God.

The first of these celestial images occurs early on in the chapter, in which Jāmī writes that Zulaykhā was "not a girl, but a star from the constellation of royalty (*nah dukhtar akhtarī az burj-i shāhī*)" (line 522). He also writes that each of her fingernails were little crescent moons (line 554). As for paradisiacal imagery, Jāmī writes that each of Zulaykhā's breasts was like "a

bubble rising in the spring of Kāfūr (*ḥabābī khāstih az ʿayn-i kāfūr*)" (line 546). Though *kāfūr* can be taken to mean simply "camphor," exegetes of the Qurʿān, reflecting on Q 76:5, argued that it was the name of a particular wellspring in paradise from which believers would drink (as camphor itself would not have an appealing taste).[217] Jāmī also writes that Zulaykhā's face was a "sample of the garden of Iram (*zi bustān-i iram rūyash namūnih*)" (line 539). The poet is referring here to the legendary Arabian city destroyed by God because its ruler, Shaddād b. ʿĀd, had built it to rival paradise.[218] Jāmī also refers to Zulaykhā as *ḥūrzadih* (line 587), or child of the Houris, "the virgins of Paradise promised to believers in the afterlife."[219]

Jāmī's celestial and paradisiacal images complement each other. While some earlier Muslim accounts of paradise, including narratives of the Prophet Muḥammad's night journey and ascension (*isrāʾ* and *miʿrāj*), had described paradise as being located on earth, in later centuries, paradise was usually described as being found in one or more of the heavens that exist above the earth.[220] For example, a contemporary of Jāmī, the Egyptian polymath al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505 CE) placed paradise in the seventh heaven in his eschatological text, *al-Budūr al-sāfira fī*

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[217] Hanne Schönig, "Camphor [Supplement 2016]," in *Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān Online* (Brill, 2006–), https://doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922_EQO_EQCOM_050490.

[218] Peter Webb, "Iram," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three Online* (Brill, 2007–), published April 2019, https://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_32509. One could argue that Jāmī's comparison of Zulaykhā to Iram prefigures her death at the poem's end.

[219] Andrew Rippen, "Ḥourī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three Online* (Brill, 2007–), published April 2016, https://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_30524. Jāmī's reference to the Houris is arguably ironic; as virgins, they are not supposed to bear children. I thank Prof. van Ruymbeke for drawing my attention to the nuances of this line and line 539.

[220] Christian Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 112–114.

ʿulūm al-ākhira.[221] This is also true of the Chagatay-language *Miʿrājnāmih* copied by Harīmalik, royal scribe of the Timurid Sultan Ulugh Beg (d. 1449 CE), in the year 1436/1437 CE.[222] These heavens located above the earth were the domains of the planets, as evidenced by Jāmī's own account of the *miʿrāj* that he includes in the sixth chapter of *Yūsuf ū Zulaykhā*.[223] In Jāmī's narration, for example, Mars belongs to the fifth heaven and Saturn, to the seventh heaven (lines 176, 178).[224] All of this is to say that Zulaykhā's body being described as belonging to paradise and to the realms of the celestial bodies (such as the moon and stars) are in concordance with one another, as paradise itself is located in the heavens above the earth, among the celestial bodies.

Jāmī's description of Zulaykhā as belonging to paradise and, therefore, the celestial realms, as well as his comparison of her face to a writing tablet, set the stage for Yūsuf's transformation from beloved to lover. As I show in the following section, Zulaykhā symbolically leads Yūsuf on a heavenly journey resembling the Prophet Muḥammad's *miʿrāj*. The full import of the scene in which this takes place—Zulaykhā's final seduction attempt, which takes place in a seven-chambered palace which she had ordered to be built for the purpose of seducing Yūsuf—is more fully apparent when one reads the scene alongside Niẓāmī's *Haft paykar*.

3.3. The Setting and Context of Zulaykhā's Seduction

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[221] Lange, *Paradise and Hell*, 131.

[222] Thackston, "Paris *Miʿrājnāma*," 263. Thackston's article includes a transliteration and translation of the text as it is preserved in a single manuscript at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Supplément turc 190. See Thackston, "Paris *Miʿrājnāma*," 265–285.

[223] Jāmī, *YZ*, 26–29.

[224] Though the other planets and celestial bodies, such as the moon, are also mentioned and clearly ordered, their locations among the heavens is imprecisely stated in Jāmī's account.

The climactic seduction scene of the narrative takes place almost exactly midway in the text (lines 2269–2495), though it calls to mind the heavenly imagery that Jāmī had used to describe Zulaykhā's beauty in the much earlier passage discussed above. Having failed in an earlier seduction attempt involving having one of her many maidservants seduce Yūsuf into bed only for Zulaykhā to switch places with her, Zulaykhā appears before her nurse, humiliated and distraught. Her nurse devises a plan: "I will build a palace pleasing to the heart like Iram (*bisāzam chūn iram dilkash banāyī*)," which will be filled with images of Zulaykhā and Yūsuf embracing each other (lines 2220–2221, quotation at 2220). Here we see that the paradisiacal nature of Zulaykhā's beauty, as described by Jāmī, is to be transposed to the setting of her seduction attempt.

Zulaykhā approves this plan, and the architect who is brought to build this palace is described by Jāmī as having specialized knowledge of astronomy, which manifests itself in the building he designs for her. This unnamed architect is "a guide to the rules of astronomy (*qavānīn-i raṣad rā rah-namāyī*)" (line 2229) whose "figuration made the *Almagest* [of Ptolemy] easy (*zi tashkīlash mijasṭī sakht āsān*)" (line 2230). Indeed, he "could fashion a painted dome atop Saturn's balcony (*bar ayvān-i zaḥl bastī muqarnas*)" (line 2233). His intimacy with the stars allows him to build a seven-chambered palace, the rooms of which were arranged concentrically, like the seven stars of the constellation Ursa Major, or *haft awrang* (line 2243). The seventh, innermost chamber, in addition to corresponding to one of the stars of this constellation, also "resembles the seventh celestial sphere (*hamchūn charkh-i haftum*)" (line 2245). I take the seventh celestial sphere to refer to the seventh planetary heaven, that of Saturn, as Jāmī describes it in his account of the *miʿrāj* discussed above. By Jāmī's time, the seven heavens of Qurʾānic cosmology had been conceptualized as seven concentric spheres circling the earth at their center,

in alignment with the Ptolemaic model.[225] The correspondence between the seventh celestial sphere and the seventh heaven is further evidenced by Jāmī's description of a heavenly tree that the seventh chamber includes:

2249. In the middle of it [the seventh chamber] was a tree standing tall, The likeness of which no eye accustomed to rarities had ever seen	میان آن درختی سر کشیده که مثلش چشم نادربین ندیده
2250. Its delicate trunk was of pure silver; Its branches were of silver, its leaves turquoise	ز سیم خام بودش نازنین ساق ز زر اغصانش فیروزه اوراق

This tree resembles the *sidrat al-muntahā*, or the "lote tree of the farthest limit," as it is described in the Chaghatay *Miʿrājnāmih* discussed above. The Prophet Muhammad encounters this tree in the seventh heaven according to this text's narration. According to this *Miʿrājnāmih*, "What is called the Sidrat al-Muntahā is a huge tree, some branches of which are of emerald and others of pearl, with leaves like elephants' ears and enormous fruit."[226] Jāmī's description of the tree, like the description of the *sidrat al-muntahā* found in the Chaghatay *Miʿrājnāmih*, involves references to precious gems.

The additional precious metals abundant in the seventh chamber, and the forms of animals they make, communicate that the chamber is not simply a representation of the seventh heaven, but of paradise itself. Jāmī writes,

2246. He [the architect] erected forty gold pillars inlaid with jewels.	مرصع چل ستون از زر برافراخت ز وحش و طیر زیبا شکلها ساخت

[225] On the various Qurʾānic references to "seven heavens," which informed *miʿrāj* narratives, see Maher Jarrar, "Heaven and Sky," in *Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān Online* (Brill, 2006–), https://doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922_q3_EQCOM_00082.

[226] Thackston, "Paris *Miʿrājnāma*," 273.

He made beautiful forms of animals and birds.	
2247. At the foot of each pillar, he fashioned out of gold A gazelle with a sac full of fragrant musk.	به پای هر ستونی ساخت از زر غزالی ناف او پر مشک اذفر
2248. Its floor was filled with golden peacocks With astonishingly bejewelled tails	ز طاووسان زرین صحن او پر به دمهای مرصع در تحیر

Atop the tree at the room's center there are even more birds made of precious minerals and gems:

2251. On each of its branches was an expertly crafted bird With emerald wings and ruby beaks	به هر شاخش ز صنعت بود طیار زمرد بال مرغی لعل منقار

The presence of the pillars calls to mind the paradisiacal city Iram, which was often referred to as "Iram of the pillars" in Muslim literature.[227] Additionally, as al-Suyūṭī's account of paradise shows, Muslim traditions described at least some of the animals in paradise as being made of precious materials, like rubies.[228] Furthermore, Canova demonstrates that Muslim sources from the eighth through the fourteenth centuries CE described paradise as being populated by gazelles and beautiful birds.[229] Indeed, Jāmī makes this connection explicit by writing, right before Zulaykhā invites Yūsuf into the palace, "It is true that even paradise, without the face of the beloved, is ugly to the desiring lover (*balī bīrūy-i jānān gar bihisht ast / bih chashm-i ʿāshiq-i mushtāq zisht ast*).

[227] Webb, "Iram."

[228] Lange, *Paradise and Hell*, 138.

[229] Giovanni Canova, "Animals in Islamic Paradise and Hell," *Arabist* 28–29 (2008): 62, 64, https://doi.org/10.58513/ARABIST.2008.28-29.4.

The palace of seven chambers calls to mind the palace at the heart of the narrative of Niẓāmī's *Haft paykar*.[230] In Niẓāmī's *maṯnavī*, the protagonist, Bahrām Gūr, the pre-Islamic Sasanian king who reigned from 419 to 438 or 439 CE, marries seven princesses "of the seven climes" and houses them in a palace of Seven Domes, each domed chamber of which corresponds to a different planet.[231] The architect of this palace of Seven Domes, Shīdih, is also described by Niẓāmī as being essentially an astronomer:

30.70 In the fields of physics, geometry, and astronomy, Everything was like a wax seal in his hands[232]	از طبیعی و هندسی و نجوم همه در دست او چو مهرهٔ موم

In the middle portion of *Haft paykar*, Bahrām passes through each of the domed chambers of his palace in succession, spending the night with each of his wives in turn, who tell him stories to both educate and entertain him.[233] Orsatti also suggests that the princesses' stories "arouse [Bahrām's] virility."[234] I suggest that Zulaykhā performs a function similar to that of the princesses in *Haft paykar*. In the role of Yūsuf's object of desire, she awakens and directs her erotic energies, ultimately teaching him a lesson about the importance of human love. Indeed,

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[230] For an up-to-date analysis of this *maṯnavī*, including a summary of the plot, see Paola Orsatti, "Nezâmi's *Haft peykar* and its Tradition in Persian Literature," in *Persian Narrative Poetry in the Classical Era*, 312–377.

[231] Orsatti, "Nezâmi's *Haft peykar*," 312–313, 323.

[232] Niẓāmī Ganjavī, *Haft paykar*, ed. Bihrūz Ṯarvatiyān (Muʾassasih-i Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr), 196.

[233] Austin O'Malley argues, however, that in the context of the *maṯnavī*'s plot as a whole, these stories fail to educate Bahrām and instead "function as distractions that Bahrām must ultimately repudiate." O'Malley, "Pleasure Domes and Treasure Houses: Gender, Storytelling, and Interpretation in Niẓāmī's *Haft paykar*," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 27, no. 3 (2024): 287–314, quotation at 287, https://doi.org/10.1080/1475262X.2025.2564984.

[234] Orsatti, "Nezâmi's *Haft peykar*," 323.

Zulaykhā's role as an educator like Bahrām's princesses has already been suggested by Jāmī's comparison of her beautiful face to a writing tablet, discussed above.[235]

Her parallel to the princesses is also seen in Jāmī's description of her appearance immediately before she calls Yūsuf into the seven-chambered palace, in which Jāmī once again uses celestial imagery to describe her. For example, applying color to her eyebrow, she "turned the crescent moon that signals Eid [al-Fitr] into a rainbow (*hilāl-i ʿīd rā qaws-i quzaḥ sākht*)" (line 2282). The makeup on her face resembles the blue Nile river against a white moon (lines 2288–2289). Her painted fingernails are also compared twice to crescent moons (*hilāl*) which signal not Eid al-Fitr, but the "Eid of union (*ʿīd-i wiṣāl*)" (lines 2294–2295). Furthermore, Jāmī describes her earring against her cheek as having "made a conjunction between moon and star (*qirān afkand mah rā bā sitārih*)" (line 2296). The poet goes on to say that this is an auspicious celestial conjunction that augurs Zulaykhā's acquisition of *dunyā* and *dīn*, "religion and the world" (line 2297). This foreshadows that her beauty will lead eventually to her marriage to Yūsuf after he becomes ruler of Egypt, as well as her turn to a less idolatrous form of worshipping God.

Unlike Bahrām's princesses, however, Zulaykhā does not rely on stories but rather on images to activate his erotic desire. The architect of her seven-chambered palace, in addition to being an astronomer, is also an expert painter. Jāmī describes his skills in painting in hyperbolic fashion:

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[235] On the princesses' directing Bahrām's desire for them towards his education and transformation, see Julie Scott Meisami, introduction to Niẓāmī Ganjavī, *The "Haft Paykar": A Medieval Romance*, trans. Meisami (Oxford University Press, 1995), xxxii, and C. Kappler, "La quête du sens comme processus alchemique: transmutation par la connaissance dans les *Haft Peykar* de Nezâmi," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 18 (1994): 142.

2237. When he would turn his thoughts to making images, The tablet of existence would be adorned by [his] pen.	به نقش آفرینش چون زدی رای شدی از خامه لوح هستی آرای
2238. In drawing, all that passed from his pen, From its flowing droplets [of paint/ink], would become alive.	به تصویر آنچه بر کلکش گذشتی ز رشح آن روانی زنده گشتی
2239. If he were to bring an image of a bird out of a rock, The heavy rock would, light-footed, fly from its place.	به سنگ ار صورت مرغی کشیدی سبک سنگ گران از جا پریدی

The image in line 2239 of a bird made of stone turning to life is a plausible reference to Qurʾān 5:113, in which Jesus (ʿĪsā) is described as performing the miracle, by God's permission, of giving life to a clay bird by breathing on it. As Shahab Ahmed notes, this incident in the Qurʾān is referred to in a *ḥadīth* (Prophetic tradition) in the canonical *Ṣaḥīḥ* collection of al-Bukhārī (d. 870 CE) that was often used by Muslims legal thinkers to condemn the practice of making figural images. This *ḥadīth* reads, in Ahmed's translation, "He who makes an image [*ṣawwara ṣūratan*] will be punished by God on the Day of Resurrection until he breathes life into it—which he will not be able to do!"[236] According to Barry, in reference to lines 2237–2239 by Jāmī, above, "Late medieval Islamic scholastic vocabulary could yield no words stronger than these to emphasize Jâmî's point that a figurative artist might indeed be endowed by God with the divine quickening power of the spirit once bestowed upon Jesus."[237] In other words, the architect/painter whom Zulaykhā's nurse had commissioned for the construction of the palace was something like a prophet himself. The images that he fashions of Zulaykhā and Yūsuf

[236] Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton University Press, 2015), 48, brackets in original. See also Barry, *Figurative Art*, 229. Barry notes that Thomas Arnold and Ignaz Goldziher had also recognized the link between Qurʾān 5:113 and this particular *ḥadīth*.

[237] Barry, *Figurative Art*, 229. Barry argues that these lines by Jāmī might have been an indirect form of praise directed toward his contemporary, the painter Bihzād (d. 1535). See Barry, *Figurative Art*, 229–230.

embracing are not lifeless, deceptive, idolatrous images. Instead, they are full of life and, as I will show, fundamentally true, in the same way that Zulaykhā's images of Yūsuf in her childhood dreams are.

Indeed, Wendy Shaw has already noted the connection between the images in the seventh chamber of Zulaykhā's pleasure palace and the images of Yūsuf she had seen in her dreams, writing, "Zuleikha seeks to replicate the power of her oneiric images through the power of the physical image."[238] I take Shaw and Barry's lead in understanding the images in the seventh chamber of Yūsuf and Zulaykhā embracing as truthful and divinely inspired. I thus disagree with Hodgkin's characterization of the paintings as "pornographic," despite the fact that I agree with him that they are "designed to inflame Yūsuf's lust."[239] Jāmī describes the images that adorn the seventh palace as follows:

2254. In that chamber, the painter made, in every place, Yūsuf's likeness and Zulaykhā image.	در آن خانه مصور ساخت هر جا مثال یوسف و نقش زلیخا
2255. They were sitting together, like lover and beloved, Out of love for soul and heart, they embraced one another.	به هم بنشسته چون معشوق و عاشق ز مهر جان و دل با هم معانق
2256. Here, one kissed the other's lip; There, one opened the other's belt.	به یکجا این لب او بوسه داده به یکجا آن میان این گشاده

As I will demonstrate below, the images not only activate Yūsuf's desire for Zulaykhā, but they also foreshadow the two lovers' marriage near the end of the poem, when their love for each other is mutual and reciprocated.

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[238] Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art?*, 237.

[239] Hodgin, "*Ṣanam*," 716.

Shaw links these images to a scene in *Haft paykar* in which Bahrām stumbles upon a hidden room in his palace Khavarnaq, which serves as a precursor to his seven-domed palace.[240] In this hidden chamber, he sees an image of himself surrounded by the princesses of the seven climes, who are his future brides.[241] I suggest that this image, like the images of Yūsuf and Zulaykhā in the seventh chamber of her palace, foretells the future and inspires desire in their male viewers, a desire that urges them to act decisively. The power of these images to incite action and their veracity stem from their connection to the stars. As Orsatti notes, above Bahrām's head in the painting in Khavarnaq, "the portraitist had inscribed what the stars had revealed to him: Once on the throne, King Bahrâm was destined to marry the princesses of the seven countries, a promise of love and sovereignty."[242] Building on Orsatti's point, that the image foretells a destiny written in the stars, I will point out that as Orsatti herself notes, Khavarnaq's architect, Simnār, was, like the architect commissioned by Zulaykhā's nurse (and Simnār's disciple, Shīdih, who later builds Bahrām's seven-domed palace), and expert in astrology/astronomy.[243] In both Niẓāmī's and Jāmī's poems, paintings designed by architects who are also astrologers/astronomers foretell the future by inciting their viewers to act in a way that brings about their fulfillment. It is as though Bahrām and Yūsuf's act of witnessing creates the very future they witness in the manner of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

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[240] Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art?*, 238.

[241] For an analysis of this scene, see Orsatti, "Nezâmi's *Haft peykar*," 320–321. For the passage itself, see Niẓāmī Ganjavī, *Haft paykar*, 135–137.

[242] Orsatti, "Nezâmi's *Haft peykar*," 320.

[243] Orsatti, "Nezâmi's *Haft peykar*," 318. For Niẓāmī's description of Simnār, see *Haft paykar*,

I suggest that the reason for the stars' truthfulness in predicting the future can be explained by al-Ghazālī's theory of dreaming, discussed earlier in this dissertation. According to this theory, during sleep the heart reflects images from the Preserved Tablet, which is a cosmological entity equivalent to the Soul of the Fixed Stars for al-Ghazālī.[244] This Tablet contains true images of future events. This is why Zulaykhā's dream of Yūsuf, which causes her to fall in love with him at the beginning of the story, is a true one. Her heart had received an image from the Preserved Tablet that correctly foretold Yūsuf's future role as *ʿazīz* of Egypt. Similarly, the images in the seventh chamber of Zulaykhā's palace, like Zulaykhā's dream images, derive from the stars, a fact to which Jāmī already alludes in his description of the palace's architecture and his description of its architect as an astronomer/astrologer. In the following section, I will show how the seduction scene itself can be read in light of this cosmic/celestial imagery. Yūsuf, like Zulaykhā, sees truthful, prophetic images from the stars, which ignite his desire and transform his character. Indeed, one can argue that his act of falling in love with her simulates the dream that she has of him. As I will show, Zulaykhā leads him on a spiritual ascent to the celestial source of dream images, simulating the Prophet Muḥammad's journey to heaven to meet God.

3.4. Yūsuf's Miʿrāj: Falling in Love with a Dream of Zulaykhā

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[244] In other cosmological schemata besides al-Ghazālī's, the Preserved Tablet is not necessarily equivalent to the Soul of the Fixed Stars. See, for example, Richard Todd's explanation of Ibn ʿArabī's cosmology, in which the Preserved Tablet mentioned in the Qurʿān is nine levels above the Fixed Stars. See Todd, "Levels of Being in Sufi Thought," in *Sufi Cosmology*, ed. Christian Lange and Alexander Knysh (Brill, 2023), 334–335. As I will show below, Jāmī's cosmology, both implicitly in the seduction scene and explicitly in his account of the *miʿrāj*, seems to depart from Ibn ʿArabī's cosmology. By "Soul" of the Fixed Stars, I refer to the fact that al-Ghazālī had borrowed aspects of Ibn Sīnā's (d. 1037 CE) cosmology, according to which each celestial sphere above the earth is governed by an intellect and a soul. See Michael E. Marmura, "AVICENNA iv. Metaphysics," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, 1982–), published December 15, 1987; last modified October 27, 2017, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/avicenna-iv/.

In Jāmī's narration of the central seduction scene, he makes it clear that Zulaykhā leads Yūsuf to each of the chambers in succession, one after the other. In the first chamber, she explains that she had loved him ever since she had dreamed of him years prior to their meeting (lines 2323–2331). Zulaykhā's nurse had already told Yūsuf that Zulaykhā had fallen in love with him due to seeing him in a dream (lines 1983–1985). However, Zulaykhā's reiteration of this fact (this is the first time Yūsuf is hearing this from her directly), I suggest, lays the groundwork for reading the seduction scene as paralleling Zulaykhā's act of dreaming of Yūsuf. She asks Yūsuf to return her gaze, to look at her, thus emphasizing the centrality of vision to the act of falling in love, a point that is further illustrated later in the seduction scene (line 2331).

Interestingly, Yūsuf's response to Zulaykhā, when he is locked in the first chamber with her, is not that he does not reciprocate her feelings. Rather, he tells her that her feelings for him distress him, and that she should desist from pursuing him, because he may not be able to withstand the force of her desire. He says,

2334. "I am not happy to be here with you, To be alone with you behind this curtain.	مرا خوش نیست کاینجا با تو باشم پس این پرده تنها با تو باشم
2335. "You are a quarry of fire; I am dry cotton. You are a piercing wind; I am a puff of musk.	تو کان آتشی من پنبهٔ خشک تو باد صرصری من نفحهٔ مشک
2336. "How can this cotton overcome the fire? In what way can this puff equal the piercing wind?"	کجا این پنبه با آتش برآید چه سان این نفحه با صرصر گراید

Yūsuf's comparison of himself to fire echoes Jāmī's use of the same metaphor in an earlier scene—when Zulaykhā first confesses her love to Yūsuf, which occurs before her scheme involving her maidservants. Jāmī writes,

2069. Happy is that cotton which flees from the flame,	خوش آن پنبه که از آتش گریزد

Because it is unable to compete with it.	چو نتواند که با آتش ستیزد

In one sense, Yūsuf is reiterating his baseline state. He is in danger of being consumed by Zulaykhā's desire for him. He wants space from her because he is afraid that proximity to her will cause him harm. This is the condition that Zulaykhā will transform by the end of the seduction scene. Instead of being a passive object of her desire, Yūsuf will come to actively desire her.

Jāmī narrates that the two then proceed to the second chamber, in which Zulaykhā makes a different plea (lines 2338–2339). Instead of demanding that Yūsuf reciprocate her desire, or at least put an end to the suffering that her desire for him is causing her, as she does in the first chamber, she instead invokes her authority over him. She tells him that as an enslaved person in her household whom she had purchased with her own wealth, he must obey her (lines 2340–2343). He replies to her that one cannot obey another's command by sinning, and that one is excused from such a command if it involves an act displeasing to God (lines 2344–2346). Yūsuf's point is that he refuses to commit adultery, because such an act is forbidden. At no point does Yūsuf say that he does not feel, or is incapable of feeling, desire for Zulaykhā. It might be the case that, instead of placing desire in him that he never had previously, Zulaykhā simply activates a desire that had already been latent within him.

Jāmī makes a point of noting that Zulaykhā continues to lead Yūsuf into chamber after chamber (line 2349). In each one, she tells him a different story and makes a different argument to convince him to requite her love (line 2350). At the end of the chapter, Jāmī narrates that the two characters finally arrive in the seventh chamber, and that Zulaykhā might yet achieve her aim. He makes this point in the form of general advice to the reader, writing,

2354. If your hope does not emerge from a hundred doors, It is not right to eat your own heart due to hopelessness.	ز صد در گر امیدت بر نیاید به نومیدی جگر خوردن نشاید
2355. One should strike another door, because, suddenly, From that door, you might produce a path to what you seek.	دری دیگر بباید زد که ناگاه ازان در سوی مقصود آوری راه

Jāmī is portraying Zulaykhā's pursuit of Yūsuf in positive terms. Instead of a temptress inducing him to sin, she is a role model worthy of being emulated. She never gives up hope, and he implies that she will eventually achieve her goal. Indeed, in the seventh chamber, she does finally achieve her goal of igniting Yūsuf's desire for her.

In the seventh chamber, Zulaykhā once more forces Yūsuf into a situation in which the two are alone in a private space (lines 2360–2362). She locks the door behind them, as she had done in all the previous chambers (line 2359). She tells him, once again, to look at her face (*ay gul-rukh bih rūy-i man naẓar kun*, line 2368). This moment further emphasizes the central role that vision plays in Zulaykhā's seduction attempt. Ultimately, it is not Zulaykhā's face that causes Yūsuf to finally begin to actively desire her. Rather, the catalyst for his desire is the series of paintings that adorn the seventh chamber, the ones that the architect-astrologer chosen by Zulaykhā's nurse had made. Jāmī narrates,

2372. But Yūsuf kept his gaze to himself; Fearing temptation, he kept his head low.	ولی یوسف نظر با خویش می‌داشت ز بیم فتنه سر در پیش می‌داشت
2373. He lowered his head to the chamber's carpet. He saw his own image painted with hers:	به فرش خانه سر افکنده در پیش مصوّر دید با او صورت خویش
2374. [He saw] a bed decorated with silk and embroidery, The two of them holding each other tight to their chests.	ز دیبا و حریر افکنده بستر گرفته یکدگر را تنگ در بر
2375. He quickly turned his gaze from that image; He turned his gaze to another place.	از آن صورت روان صرف نظر کرد نظرگاه خود از جای دگر کرد

2376. Whether he looked at the doors or walls, He saw the two of them paired together, rosy-cheeked.	اگر در را اگر دیوار را دید به هم جفت آن دو گلرخسار را دید
2377. He turned his face to the God of Heaven And saw on the ceiling the same sight.	رخ خود در خدای آسمان کرد به سقف اندر تماشای همان کرد
2378. His inclination toward Zulaykhā grew; he finally turned to look at her face."	فزودش میل ازان سوی زلیخا نظر بگشاد بر روی زلیخا

In this moment, Yūsuf is finally transformed from an object of Zulaykhā's desire into a desiring subject. His inclination toward her grows, and he finally dares to return her gaze. The movement of his gaze, from the rug on the chamber's floor and up the walls to the ceiling, symbolizes an ascent. Indeed, Jāmī seems to hint directly at this reading when he writes that Yūsuf had looked up, hoping to see God in heaven.

What he sees when he intends to see God is the two of them, united as lovers. I suggest that this image of the two of them—indeed, every image that Yūsuf sees of him and Zulaykhā united in love—functions in the same way as Zulaykhā's dream-images of Yūsuf. As I have already discussed, the seven-chambered palace where he and Zulaykhā are located in this scene is an analogue to the seven heavenly spheres above the earth. The seventh chamber is the seventh heaven, an interpretation that is further supported by the presence of the magnificent tree at the chamber's center. I have suggested that this tree corresponds to the *sidrat al-muntahā*, which marks the limit of the seventh heaven, beyond which the Prophet Muḥammad encounters God. When Yūsuf looks up, this can be interpreted as him looking up at the eighth heaven, which is the sphere of the fixed stars. Jāmī confirms his belief that the fixed stars are in the eighth heaven in his account of Muḥammad's *miʿrāj*. He writes that after Muḥammad has passed *sidrat al-muntahā*,

179. Past that, he made the eighth heaven his dwelling. The eyes of the fixed stars lit up because of him.	وزان پس قصر هشتم ساخت مسکن ثوابت را بدو شد چشم روشن

As already mentioned, the eighth heaven is the location of the Preserved Tablet according to some cosmological systems, such as al-Ghazālī's. Though Jāmī does not specify the location of the Preserved Tablet, and though some cosmological accounts, like Ibn ʿArabī's, place the Preserved Tablet somewhere besides the eighth heaven, I choose to read Yūsuf's act of turning to look at Zulaykhā as an indirect reference to the Preserved Tablet. As discussed above, when Jāmī first introduces Zulaykhā's character in the poem by providing a head-to-foot description of her, he describes her face as a tablet that heaven had laid down, on which her facial features form letters of the alphabet. Her face, together with the images on the ceiling and throughout the room, inflame Yūsuf's longing for her. Indeed, one can argue that, if her face and not the ceiling is an analogue of the Preserved Tablet, then the ceiling can correspond to God's Throne.

At this moment in the story, Zulaykhā has taken Yūsuf on his own symbolic *miʿrāj*. She has led him through the seven heavens of the seven chambers. From the seventh heaven, she has directed his face upward and then to her face (the Preserved Tablet), in proximity both to the *sidrat al-muntahā* and the very presence of God. In this way, she performs a function analogous to that of Bahrām's wives in *Haft paykar*, whom scholars have also described as leading Bahrām on a transformative journey modelled after Muḥammad's *miʿrāj*. Reversing the reading of *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā* according to which Zulaykhā's love for Yūsuf teaches her, or trains her for, divine love, here she acts as Yūsuf's instructor, teaching him about his embodied desire for her.

Yūsuf's transformation into a desiring subject is instigated in this moment, even though this transformation is completed later. The beginnings of this transformation are signaled in the dialogue between the two characters, which indicates that the boundaries between them have

become blurred, and their roles as lover/beloved have become unstable. When Zulaykhā sees Yūsuf finally looking at her, her hope for union with him is renewed (lines 2379–2380). She tells him that he is her food and her medicine—indeed, he is the very water of life, the source of life for her (lines 2381–2383). In a passage already discussed above, she implores him to satisfy her desires, in the name of God, who created his beauty:

2386. "In the name of that God, I bind you with an oath, Who is Lord of all lords,	به حق آن خدایی بر تو سوگند که باشد بر خداوندان خداوند
2387. "By this world-conquering beauty that God gave you, By this loveliness that he placed upon your cheek"	به این حسن جهانگیری که دادت به این خوبی که در عارض نهادت

After describing every aspect of his beauty—from the features of his face, such as his mouth, eyes, eyebrows, and cheeks; to his hair, his feet, and his stature (lines 2388—2393)—she asks him to end her suffering, which she describes as hunger:

2400. "I am no longer capable of [withstanding] the hunger of separation from you; Grant me, from the table of union with you, nourishment for my soul.	ز قحط هجر تو بس ناتوانم ببخش از خوان وصلت قوت جانم
2401. "The dates are from you, oh fresh palm tree; the milk is from me. Do not be stingy in setting the table.	ز تو ای نخل تر خرما ز من شیر مکن در خوان نهادن هیچ تقصیر
2402. "Give me sustenance to my soul out of these dates and milk. By giving me life, save me from my hunger."	مرا زین شیر و خرما قوت جان ده ز جان دادن درین قحطم امان ده

Zulaykhā is saying that she literally cannot live without him, a fact that turns out to be true at the story's end, as discussed in the preceding dissertation chapter. An additional aspect of her speech here, however, is her invitation to Yūsuf that he partake in a partnership with her. She tells him that if he provides the dates, she can provide the milk. In other words, she can satisfy a desire of

his as well, granting him nourishment and sustenance. Her desire, ultimately, is not simply to use him as an object to satisfy her desire. Rather, she encourages him to partake with her in shared pleasure and satisfaction.

Yūsuf's reply to her is telling. He seems, at least indirectly, to take up Zulaykhā's invitation. Instead of rejecting what she asks for, he asks her to allow him to delay the satisfaction of her desire. This is the first instance in which he has expressed willingness to be united with her. After inclining him toward her by transporting him to the heavens, she has prepared him to be her lover. Indeed, his response to her acknowledges that she, like him, possesses a beautiful form that communicates the same divine meaning as his form does. The demarcated roles of lover and beloved are shifting. He tells her,

2406. "In the name of the Conditionless One, of whom all conditions are an image— All insides and outsides are His image.	به آن بی‌چون که چونها صورت اوست برونها چون درونها صورت اوست
2407. "From the ocean of His bounty, the heavens are bubbles. The sun is lit by a flash of His light.	ز بحر جود او گردون حبابیست زبرق نور او خورشید تابیست
2408. "In the name of the pure ones from whom I descend, Within whose purity I find myself—	به پاکانی کز ایسان زاده‌ام من بدین پاکیزگی افتاده‌ام من
2409. "My luster, jewel-like, is from them, And my shine, star-like, is from them—	از ایشان است روشن گوهر من وز ایشان است رخشان اختر من
2410. "If you lift your hand from me today, Let me pass from these dire straits,	که گر امروز دست از من بداری مرا زین تنگنا بیرون گذاری
2411. "Then quickly you shall see my happiness; You shall see me perform thousands of duties owed to you—	بزودی کامگاری بینی از من هزاران حق گزاری بینی از من
2412. "From my life-giving, ruby lip you shall find your wish,	ز لعل جان فزایم کام یابی

In my heart-ravishing stature, you shall find rest.	به قد دلکشم آرام یابی
2413. “Do not haste in achieving your aim; Many are the slow ones who are happier than those who rush.	مکن تعجیل در تحصیل مقصود بسا دیرا که خوشتر باشد از زود
2414. “If a good prey is caught in the trap late, That is better than rushing to an unhappy end.”	گر افتد صید نیکو دیر در دام به است از زود نانیکو سرانجام

Yūsuf echoes Zulaykhā’s appeal to God by extending her notion of God as the source of Yūsuf’s beauty. It is, of course, true that God is the source of Yūsuf’s beauty, but Yūsuf expands this point by asserting that all entities that exist—all “insides” and “outsides”—are God’s image. His implication is that Zulaykhā, like him, is an image of God. This is further hinted at the end of his speech, after he has reminded her of his noble prophetic lineage, which is pure and sinless.[245] He tells her that if she were to just wait, he would satisfy her desire. He implies, without stating it directly, that he also feels desire for her. He portrays himself as both an object of desire but also a subject with agency to act. Though he is a “prey” that will be caught late in her “trap,” and though he acknowledges how his beautiful form will give her pleasure, he nonetheless describes himself as a willing servant who will perform thousands of duties for her. This is the first moment in the story in which Yūsuf expresses, even indirectly, his desire for Zulaykhā. He is undergoing a transformation as a result of the journey on which she has led him. No longer simply a desired object, Yūsuf is on his way to owning his desire, to becoming a desiring, active subject in his own right, and ultimately becoming Zulaykhā’s lover.

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[245] I suggest that Yūsuf’s invocation of his prophetic lineage might be an oblique reference to the fact that, in earlier versions of the story, what ultimately prevents Yūsuf from committing adultery with Zulaykhā is a vision that he has of his father, the prophet Yaʿqūb. For an excerpt from the Qurʾān commentary of al-Thaʿlabī (d. 1035 or 1036 CE), which narrates this incident, see Shaw, *What is ‘Islamic’ Art?*, 230. For an analysis of the Qurʿān commentaries of al-Ṭabarī (d. 923 CE) and al-Bayḍawī (d. ca. 1286 CE), including a discussion of the former’s inclusion of the vision of Yaʿqūb, see Barbara Freyer Stowasser, *Women in the Qur’an, Traditions, and Interpretation* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 52–54.

3.5. The Lovers' Quarrel: Exposing Yūsuf's Dishonesty

I suggest that from this moment to the end of the scene, Yūsuf's desire has, in fact, been activated by Zulaykhā's initiative. She has taken him on a journey to the cosmos, to the source of dream-images, the very source (the Preserved Tablet) that had caused her to fall in love with him. The remainder of the seduction scene involves Zulaykhā exposing Yūsuf's deceit, or his unwillingness to disclose the activation of his desire to her. By the end of the scene, he finally completes his transformation from desired object to desiring subject, from lover to beloved. However, the two lovers' happy union is forestalled until the story's end, which has already been discussed in the preceding chapter, but which will be re-examined here.

Yūsuf explains his request that Zulaykhā delay the fulfillment of her desire after she complains that she cannot wait any longer (lines 2415–2418). Specifically, she compares herself to someone dying of thirst: "Zulaykhā said, 'Do not seek from the thirsty one the ability / to put off drinking water to tomorrow (*Zulaykhā guft kaz tashnih majū tāb / kih andāzad bih fardā khūrdan-i āb*, line 2415).Yūsuf tells her that he fears two consequences of submitting to Zulaykhā's advances now: God's punishment and the vizier's anger (*biguftā māniʿ-i man zān dū chīz ast / ʿiqāb-i īzād ū qahr-i ʿazīz ast*, line 2419). Yūsuf explains that if the *ʿazīz* were to find out about Zulaykhā and him committing adultery, he would kill Yūsuf, and on Judgment Day, God would place Yūsuf among the adulterers and treat him accordingly (lines 2420–2423). Though Yūsuf has not yet clearly stated that he actively desires her, he nonetheless reiterates that he is at least willing to satisfy her desire. His only impediment is not, according to him, absence of desire on his part, but rather fear of consequences. The two continue their argument: Zulaykhā tells Yūsuf that she will poison the vizier so that he will never know, and that God is all merciful but, nonetheless, Zulaykhā can bribe God with treasure that she has hidden away (lines 2424—

2428). Yūsuf once again has a response ready for her. He tells her that he would not want to cause harm to another person, particularly not the vizier, who has treated him with kindness (lines 2429–2430). Furthermore, God cannot be bribed (lines 2431–2432).

Zulaykhā gives a lengthy reply (lines 2433–2442), the main point of which is that Yūsuf should stop making excuses. She tells him,

2434. "My heart has become the target for affliction's arrow— Enough of excuse after excuse that you're making!	دلم شد تیر محنت را نشانه ز بس کآری بهانه بر بهانه
2435. "Excuses are crooked-faced; they lie. Excuses are not the way of honesty.	بهانه کجروی و حیله سازیست بهانه نی طریق راستبازیست
2436. "God forbid that I be on the path of the crooked-faced— That I hear another excuse from you."	معاذ الله که راه کجروم من ز تو این حیله دیگر نشنوم من

Zulaykhā's point is that Yūsuf is not addressing the heart of the matter–the absence or presence of desire. His inability to be with her, according to his own words, has nothing to do with whether or not he desires her. Every reason that he has given for not being with her now is simply an excuse. Indeed, Zulaykhā is calling Yūsuf deceitful. She is implying that he is hiding the presence of his own desire by raising objections to the two of them being together that only have to do with their circumstances. If it were true that he did not want to be with her, then he would have said so, and his saying so would put the matter to rest. Rather, if they are, in fact, lovers—a situation to which Yūsuf has already opened the door by expressing his willingness to satisfy her desire—then they should be honest with one another. Indeed, her calling out Yūsuf for his dishonesty also belies the excuse he makes on the basis of his "pure" prophetic lineage (lines 2408–2409, quoted and discussed above). It is true that prophets should not be adulterers. But they should not be liars, either. Ironically, she invokes the same God that he had invoked to protect his chastity to keep her honest. She, unlike Yūsuf, is at least honest about her desires.

Indeed, Jāmī himself seems to suggest that Yūsuf's objections are no more than excuses when he does not even give Yūsuf space to reply, writing,

2443. When Zulaykhā finished disclosing this secret, Yūsuf again started to delay with excuses.	زلیخا چون به پایان برد این راز تعلّل کرد دیگر یوسف آغاز
2444. Zulaykhā said, "Oh Hebrew–speaker, Who has taken up my time with this talking […]	زلیخا گفت کای عبری عبارت که بردی از سخن وقتم به غارت

Jāmī juxtaposes Zulaykhā's "secret" (*rāz*) with Yūsuf's delaying excuses (*taʿallul*), giving no space to the latter. The secret truth that Zulaykhā is revealing is not her desire for Yūsuf; she has already explained this to him in detail. I suggest that the secret to which Jāmī is referring is Yūsuf's dishonesty, that his reasons for forestalling union with her are no more than excuses. As Zulaykhā's interruption of his last attempt at making excuses shows, his reasons might as well be a foreign language to her. Once more, she seems to suggest that all of his talk is pointless. The only satisfactory reason that Yūsuf could give for not being with Zulaykhā is the absence of desire for her, but he cannot give this reason, because it is not true.

Zulaykhā ultimately comes closest to achieving her aim by threatening to take her own life and framing Yūsuf for the crime. Though one can argue that this constitutes hypocrisy on her part, because she is blaming Yūsuf for trickery and deception while engaging in the same, I suggest that her threat is actually, at its core, honest. She has indicated to him, numerous times, that he is her source of life and that she cannot live without him. She has asked him, earlier in this scene, to feed her soul and not let her die hungry, and she has told him that she might die from the thirst caused by separation from him (lines 2400–2402, line 2415). In light of this context, her threat to kill herself is rooted in her literal inability to live without him. She says,

2445. "Do not strike away my wish with you rejecting hand,	مزن بر روی کارم دست رد را

Because I will kill myself with your own hand.	که خواهم کشتن از دست تو خود را
2446. “With delight, place your hand on my neck, And if not, I shall cut it with a sharp dagger.	به عشرت دستم اندر گردن آویز و گر نه برمش از خنجر تیز
2447. “If you do not put your hand on my neck, My blood shall now be on your neck.	نیازی دست اگر در گردن من شود خون منت حالی به گردن
2448. “I shall draw the dagger, like a lily, upon my body; I shall stain my dress with blood red, like a rose.	کشم خنجر چو سوسن بر تن خویش چو گل در خون کشم پیراهن خویش
2449. “I shall place upon my body my soul’s mark of separation; I shall find release from your excuse-making.”	نهم بر تن ز جان داغ جدایی ز حجت گفتنت یابم رهایی

Zulaykhā ends her threat by warning Yūsuf that, once the vizier finds her dead before him, he shall surely kill Yūsuf (lines 2450–2451). She is responding directly to his fear of being caught by the vizier in the act of committing adultery. Still, her threat is not a form of trickery. As she says, her act of suicide would constitute a visible manifestation of the pain she bears inside her (line 2449). She shall disclose what is within her, unlike Yūsuf, who still cannot admit his desire for her.

3.6. Waking from the Dream: The Delayed Union between Lovers

Yūsuf’s intervention to prevent her from killing herself finally leads him to act on his desire for her. At the end of the scene, the two finally embrace as lovers, though their tryst is cut short due to Yūsuf’s observation of Zulaykhā’s idol hidden under a curtain, a point that I have discussed in the preceding chapter but to which I will return. Despite the fact that this scene ends, Jāmī narrates that Zulaykhā, upon concluding her threat, pulls out from under the bed a shining, green-colored dagger (line 2452). The poet describes her drawing a drop of blood from her neck with it as her pouring a drop of water on the flame of her sorrowful longing (line 2453). Her threat is based in genuine feeling—the promise of death offers her release from the pain of

being apart from Yūsuf. This finally spurs Yūsuf to act. He jumps up and seizes her hand with his, which makes a bracelet on her wrist (line 2454). He reiterates to her his promise to satisfy her desire if she would only wait:

2455. “Relax from this hastiness, oh Zulaykhā, And turn your foot back from this path, oh Zulaykhā.	کزین تندی بیارام ای زلیخا وز این ره بازکش گام ای زلیخا
2456. “From me, you will see the face of what you intend; In union with me, you will arrive at your heart’s wish.”	زمن خواهی رخ مقصود دیدن به وصل من به کام دل رسیدن

Hearing his promise to her, Zulaykhā actually becomes more beautiful in Yūsuf’s eyes. It is as though his act of love—finally touching her, thereby saving her life—has finally turned her into his beloved. Jāmī writes,

2457. Zulaykhā [was] the moon at the peak of heart-stealing On account of Yūsuf, when she saw his kindness	زلیخا ماه اوج دلستانی ز یوسف چون بدید آن مهربانی
2458. She began to think that he would grant her wish, That he would give her peace through union with him.	گمان زد شد که خواهد کام او داد به وصل خویشتن آرام او داد
2459. She swiftly threw her dagger from her hand. Seeking peace, she laid down a new plan.	ز دست خود روانی خنجر انداخت به قصد صلح طرح دیگر انداخت

Zulaykhā’s new plan is to physically embrace Yūsuf. In Jāmī’s account, Yūsuf seems to welcome her touch. He is a willing participant and wants the consummation of his desire, which has finally become undeniable. Jāmī writes,

2460. She filled her lip with sugar from the ambrosia of his mouth. She made her forearms into a neck ring and her legs into a belt.	لب از نوشین دهانش پر شکر کرد ز ساعد طوق وز ساقش کمر کرد
2461. Before his arrow, she made her soul into a target. Desiring his jewel, she made her body into an oyster.	به پیش ناوکش جان را هدف ساخت ز شوق گوهرش تن را صدف ساخت

2462. But Yūsuf did not let go of his bow before the target. He did not break the seal of the oyster's jewel.	ولی نگشاد یوسف بر هدف شست پی گوهر صدف را مهر نشکست
2463. His heart desired to pierce that pearl with [his] diamond, But he upheld the rule that he be chaste.	دلش می‌خواست در سفتن به الماس ولی می‌داشت حکم عصمتش پاس
2464. Zulaykhā was hot in her urgency, but Yūsuf Was constantly giving reasons to stop.	زلیخا در تقاضا گرم و یوسف همی انگیخت اسباب توقف
2465. He put a hand on his belt, Opening one knot but fastening two.	نهادی بر ازار خویش دستی یکی عقده گشادی و دو بستی

Zulaykhā's physical advances are returned by Yūsuf, though begrudgingly. She kisses him and wraps her arms around his neck, her legs around his waist. Though Jāmī insists that he does not actually have intercourse with her, Yūsuf comes very close. He is physically aroused, and he finally wants the same thing that she wants. She has fully become the object of his desire, and he has taken the role of desiring subject. Yūsuf's desire is so intense that he must remind himself of the rule that prophets be chaste (line 2463). He becomes internally divided, torn between his fully awakened desire for Zulaykhā and his unwillingness to sin.

The power of Yūsuf's desire is shown by his inability to overcome it on his own. As discussed in the previous dissertation chapter, what finally prevents Yūsuf from having intercourse with Zulaykhā is his noticing the idol that Zulaykhā worships under a curtain. He reprimands himself for being less shameless before the true, all-seeing God than Zulaykhā is before her false idol (lines 2473–2475). Yūsuf interrupts their embrace very suddenly. Jāmī conveys just how close the two have come to having intercourse in the following line:

2477. He placed the alif fār from the two branches of the lām-alif, He freed the camphor candle from the silver scissor.	الف کرد از دو شاخ لام الف دور رهاند از گاز سیمین شمع کافور

Shaw interprets the moment in which Yūsuf abruptly interrupts his and Zulaykhā's lovemaking as meaning that Yūsuf has sinned along with Zulaykhā, though his sin is not fornication but idolatry. Her worship of the idol is paralleled by her adoration of him; he has let himself become her idol, thereby committing the sin of *shirk*.[246] She further argues that Yūsuf's interruption of coitus—his removal of his "alif" from Zulaykhā's "lām-alif"—symbolizes an utterance of the first part of the *shahāda*: *lā ilāha illa Allāh*.[247]

While I find Shaw's analysis interesting and provocative, I nonetheless disagree with her that the two lovers have committed *shirk*. As I have discussed in the preceding chapter, Zulaykhā excuses herself of her idolatry by arguing that the source of her love for her idol is God, and the idol, like all of creation, reflects or manifests God. Indeed, Shaw is also aware that, according to a certain reading of Ibn ʿArabī, there is no idolatry in any true sense, as all acts of worship are directed at God.[248] However, Shaw nonetheless sees both the idol and Yūsuf as "transitional object[s] toward the true love of the ineffable divine."[249] As my analysis in the preceding chapter has shown, I disagree with this interpretation. Rather, as I will elaborate below, if one takes seriously the notion, found in Ibn Arabī's thought, that the entire world is a manifestation of God's attributes, then all love for any object is ultimately directed at God.

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[246] Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art?*, 242.

[247] Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art?*, 242–243. Shaw is building on Barry's analysis. She writes, "Michael Barry glosses lam-aleph as a calligram looking like a fork (and thus the open legs/lips of the woman), particularly in the Thuluth script often used to write Qurans." See also Barry, *Figurative Art*, 211.

[248] Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art?*, 240–242.

[249] Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art?*, 248.

Indeed, if all of creation manifests God, then there is no real distinction between lover and beloved, either. I have already indicated that in this seduction scene, these roles as performed by Zulaykhā and Yūsuf have become unstable, and that Yūsuf has shifted from being beloved to lover, just as Zulaykhā has made the same shift in the other direction. The collapsing of the differences between the two lovers is further suggested by the fact that, as I have suggested, Yūsuf and Zulaykhā have both fallen in love with one another on the basis of dream images. Indeed, Jāmī describes Yūsuf, right before he interrupts their lovemaking, as having woken from a dream (*va zi ān khūsh khvāb-gah bīdār bar-khāst*, line 2476). I suggest that this does not necessarily mean that Yūsuf's desire for Zulaykhā is somehow untrue or misleading. As discussed in the preceding chapter, Muslim thinkers reflecting on dreams, such as al-Ghazālī, Ibn ʿArabī, and al-Qayṣarī, all believed dreams to be truthful. In al-Ghazālī's case, dreams worked according to the same mechanism as prophetic revelation: the heart reflected images of the future found on the Preserved Tablet. Ibn ʿArabī and his followers such as al-Qayṣarī believed that the forms that one sees in dreams are not fundamentally different from the forms one sees in waking life. All of these forms are self-manifestations of God. For these reasons, I suggest that Yūsuf's "dream" of Zulaykhā here can be read as a parallel of her dream of him. In both cases, what the dreamer sees is true of the future. When Zulaykhā sees Yūsuf telling her he loves her and that he is the vizier of Egypt, he is describing a future condition. Similarly, when Yūsuf embraces Zulaykhā as her lover, finally acting on his desire for her, he is having a foretaste of the future, in which the two are united.

Indeed, after their marriage, the two characters replay this seduction scene. Far from a shameful act of sinning, the scene is re-interpreted by Yūsuf as an act of kindness on Zulaykhā's part, one that he must repay. The first part of the seduction scene that they replay is the tearing of

the tunic. In the original seduction scene, Jāmī narrates that Yūsuf miraculously undoes the locks of every chamber, and flees from the seventh all the way to the first (lines 2478–2480). In response,

2481. When Zulaykhā saw that, she sprung from her heel. She caught him in the final chamber.	زلیخا چون بدید آن از عقب جست به وی در آخرین درگاه پیوست
2482. To get him to return, she pulled his skirt. From behind, she ripped his tunic.	پی بازآمدن دامن کشیدن ز سوی پشت پیراهن دریدش
2483. He escaped from the hand of the one newly struck with grief, With a tunic torn like a rosebud.	برون رفت از کف آن غم رسیده به سان غنچه پیراهن دریده

In the re-enactment of this scene after the two are married, it is Yūsuf who tears Zulaykhā's tunic. Jāmī writes,

3569. One night, she began to flee from Yūsuf's hand. She sought to escape him, falling and leaping.	شبی از چنگ یوسف شد گریزان خلاصی جست ازو افتان و خیزان
3570. When, from behind, his hand touched her skirt, Her tunic was torn by his hand.	چو زد دست از قفا در دامن او ز دستش چاک شد پیراهن او
3571. Zulaykhā said, "Though I, before this, Ripped your tunic from your body,	زلیخا گفت اگر من بر تن تو دریدم پیش از این پیراهن تو
3572. "You have also, now, torn my tunic. You have ended up a companion to my sin.	تو هم پیراهنم اکنون دریدی به پاداش گناه من رسیدی
3573. In this affair, due to our concord, we have nothing to fear— In tunic-ripping, we are even."	در این کار از تفاوت بی هراسیم به پیرانه دری رأساً برأسیم

Despite the fact that Zulaykhā refers to this act as a sin, her statement that neither one has anything to fear from this act indicates that the act is not inherently sinful. Rather, one can interpret this to mean that Zulaykhā would have only been in error if Yūsuf had not reciprocated

this act. It would have been a mistake if he had not desired her just as she had desired him. Now that they desire each other, and they have shown this symbolically via the tearing of each other's garments, neither one has transgressed against the other. Zulaykhā's "sin" of tearing Yūsuf's garment has been transformed into a sign of him reciprocating her love and desire for him.

The setting in which Zulaykhā had seduced him is also symbolically transformed after the two are finally united. Yūsuf builds a house of worship for her that resembles the pleasure palace that she had built. Jāmī writes,

3575. He built a palace of gold in her name— Not a palace, but rather a house of worship.	به نام او ز زر کاشانه‌ای ساخت نه کاشانه عبادت‌خانه‌ای ساخت
3576. Like the balcony of the sky, its bricks were turquoise. Its ground was fine, and its craft was heavenly.	چو کاخ آسمان فیروزه خشتی زمین از لطف و صنع او بهشتی
3577. It was full of paintings and images, from carpet to ceiling. The vision and thinking of the geometrician was stopped by it.	پر از نقش و نگار از فرش تا سقف مهندس را بر او فکر و نظر وقف
3578. From its windows, the light of fortune shone. From its doors, fortune's messenger flew.	ز روزنهاش نور بخت تابان ز درها قاصد دولت شتابان
3579. Due to their height, its rooms were far from the evil eye. Its vaulted arches were like hourīs' eyebrows.	ز عالی غرفه‌هایش چشم بد دور مقوّس طاقها چون آبروی حور
3580. The sun derived its substance from the reflection of its ornaments. Shadows were impossible in its interior.	ز عکس شمسه‌اش خور برده مایه محال از وی درون خانه سایه
3581. Sprung forth from the ink of the fortunate pen On its walls were trees from a date orchard.	دمیده ز آب کلک نیکبختان ز نخلستان دیوارش درختان
3582. On each of their branch branches, birds sat. But their beaks were closed off from singing.	به هر شاخی ازان مرغان نشسته ولیکن از نوا منقار بسته

This house of worship, like Zulaykhā's seven-chambered palace, is described using imagery drawn from the sky and the heavens. It is turquoise like the sky, and it shines gold like the sun. Also like her palace, it evokes paradise. Its arches are like houris' eyebrows, and like the one Zulaykhā built, it includes inside of it images and forms of trees and birds. Furthermore, I read line 3577 as a reference to the seventh chamber of Zulaykhā's palace, which included images from the carpet to the ceiling, which Yūsuf tracked with his eyes during the seduction scene.

Despite its resemblances to Zulaykhā's palace of seven chambers, Yūsuf's house of worship is not meant to supercede the prior structure. Rather, the new building is a response to the previous building—it is a gift of equal value. Yūsuf tells Zulaykhā this explicitly. Jāmī writes,

3583. In the middle of the house, he had raised an auspicious throne, With pieces of gold and clear ruby.	میان خانه زد فرخنده تختی ز زر لختی ز لعل ناب لختی
3584. Two hundred marvelous images were suspended from it. A thousand pendants hung from it.	دو صد نقش بدیع انگیخت از وی هزار آویزه در آویخت از وی
3585. With kindness in his heart, he took Zulaykhā by the hand. He seated her on an elevated throne and sat.	زلیخا را گرفت از مهر دل دست نشاندش بر فراز تخت و بنشست
3586. He told her, "Oh, with such various acts of generosity, You have shamed me until Judgment Day.	بدو گفت ای به انواع کرامت مرا شرمنده کردی تا قیامت
3587. "At that time, when you used to call me, 'my slave,' You made a miraculous house in my name,	در آن وقتی که می‌خواندی غلامم کرامت خانه‌ای کردی به نامم
3588. "Out of rubies and gold to give it red and yellow colors— It had every possible direction.	ز لعل و زر پی سرخی و زردی هر آن زینت که امکان داشت کردی

3589. “Now I, also, to thank you for your gift, Have made a house of worship for you.”	کنون من هم پی شکر عطایت عبادتخانه‌ای کردم بر ایت

Far from a palace of illicit desire and licentiousness (which it never was in the first place) Zulaykhā’s palace becomes recontextualized as a gift that exceeds the generosity of a master for her slave. Yūsuf tells her that he must honor her gift, that he owes her something in return. One can also interpret the “gift” he mentions in this line as not simply the palace itself, but Zulaykhā’s action of seducing him in the palace. She had given him the gift of awakening his desire for her, of preparing him for their union together. Without her education in love, he would not have the experience or pleasure of loving her that he now has.

In what ways might Zulaykhā’s act of seducing Yūsuf be a gift? Why does Jāmī portray Zulaykhā’s plan to seduce Yūsuf as ultimately positive, as an act that needed to be repaid? Why was it important for Yūsuf to become Zulaykhā’s lover, and her his beloved? If human love is simply a bridge to divine love (a notion that I have problematized), why did Yūsuf, who was God’s chosen prophet, seemingly need to take the path of human love?

3.7. Chapter Conclusion: Losing Oneself in Love

In what follows, I suggest that Jāmī, building on the ideas of Ibn ʿArabī, portrays human love as an avenue for experiencing self-loss. It gives experiential knowledge of the Sufi concept of *fanāʾ*. As Shaw writes, “The unprecedented eroticism enlivening the [seduction] scene reflects the Sufi recognition of sexuality as a transcendent experience simulating the passionate desire for annihilation in God.”[250] Indeed, in the seduction scene itself, Zulaykhā already hints at the role of human love in decentering one’s attachment to oneself. She tells him,

[250] Shaw, *What is ‘Islamic’ Art?*, 239.

2381. “Oh you are self-satisfied, satisfy my want. Through union with you, treat my pain.”[251]	که ای خود کام کام من روا کن به وصل خویش دردم را دوا کن

In this line, Zulaykhā accuses Yūsuf of being unable to love her because he is too self-centered. He is unwilling to open himself up to her. Instead, he is firmly attached to himself and his own interests. As Shaw puts it, “The poem reveals Yusuf’s self-reflexive and self-sufficient desire as narcissistically inverted.”[252] She suggests that Yūsuf’s self-love is actually a hindrance to loving God. Shaw goes on to quote Hoffman-Ladd’s summary of Ibn ʿArabī’s views in *al-Futūḥāt al-makkīya*, that “it is insufficient for man to contemplate himself by himself to understand God; the best and most perfect kind of contemplation of God is in woman.”[253] In other words, love of God might be fully understood only after experiencing the love of a human.

It is true that Ibn ʿArabī uses gendered language, and he describes male and female desire differently.[254] Nonetheless, the key point is that human love, because it causes one to experientially venture past the boundaries of the self, allows one to truly experience the Sufi goal of *fanāʾ*. We see this in Jāmī’s poem more clearly in the scene in which Yūsuf and Zulaykhā finally do have intercourse, on their wedding night. Jāmī writes,

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[251] Barry translates the first hemistich as, “‘You only feel lust for your very own self!’” While I disagree that *khūd-kām* is necessarily best understood as “lusting” after oneself, this line nonetheless indicates Yūsuf being closed off to Zulaykhā’s desires in a self-preserving way. Barry, *Figurative Art*, 206.

[252] Shaw, *What is ‘Islamic’ Art?*, 239.

[253] Valerie J. Hoffman-Ladd, “Mysticism and Sexuality in Sufi Thought and Life,” *Mystics Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (1992): 89, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20717124. Quoted in Shaw, *What is ‘Islamic’ Art?*, 239. For the passage from *al-Futūḥāt al-makkīya* upon which Hoffman-Ladd bases her analysis, see Hoffman-Ladd, “Mysticism and Sexuality,” 88.

[254] See, in addition the passages from Ibn ʿArabī’s texts quoted in Hoffman-Ladd, Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy*, 177–188.

3524. Though the arrogant carnal soul was first an unbroken horse, In the end, it left behind all concepts of "we" and "me."	چو نفس سرکش اوّل توسنی کرد در آخر ترک مایی و منی کرد
3525. At night, a thirsty one rose up from sleep. They put their head in the silver pool, seeking water.	شبانگه تشنه‌ای برخاست از خواب به سیمین برکه سر در زد پی آب
3526. First, they drowned, then in the end, happily, they bent. They came back and slept in their own place.	شد اوّل غرقه و آخر با خوشی جفت برون آمد به جای خویشتن خفت
3527. Two rosebuds blossomed from two rose stems, With the wind of early morning, they arrived together.	دو گنچه از دو گلبن بردمیده ز باد صبحدم با هم رسیده
3528. One blossomed, the other did not. The one that did not blossom was hidden in the one that did.	یکی نشگفته و دیگر شگفته نهفته ناشگفته در شگفته

In Jāmī's description of the physical consummation of the lovers' marriage, the two lose their identities in the act of love. As line 3524 communicates, they each lose their sense of self when united with the other. The boundary between self and other—which Yūsuf had tried to maintain, provoking Zulaykhā's censure in line 2381, above—has dissolved. Indeed, in lines 3525 and 3526, it is unclear who exactly Jāmī is describing. In lines 3527 and 3528, they become exactly like each other. They are two rosebuds, taking turns blossoming to let the other inside.

The link between self-loss during intercourse and fanāʾ is made clear in Ibn ʿArabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-makkīya*. Describing a man having intercourse with his wife, Ibn ʿArabī' writes,

> He dissolves [*yafnī fanāʾan*] in her with a real annihilation and sincere love. He encounters her with his essence in an absolute correspondence. For that reason, he dissolves in her. There is no part in him that is not in her. Love has suffused all his parts, so his entire being is interconnected with her. For that reason, he dissolves in his likeness with a complete annihilation [*yafnī al-fanāʾ al-kullī*], in contrast to his love for anything that is not his likeness. He becomes one with his beloved so that he says, "I am the one I

> desire and the one I desire [*ahwā*] is I," and at the final point of this station says, "I am God [*anā Allāh*]."[255]

The dissolution of the lover's identities represents the cosmological reality that Jāmī outlines at the very start of his poem: the entire world partakes in the common circumstance of being a manifestation of God. In the conclusion to this dissertation, I explain how this self-dissolution requires the mediation of human love, and it ultimately justifies love even when such love seems to be transgressive or excessive.

[255] Quoted and translated in Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy*, 186.

Conclusion: Love between Self-Loss and Bewilderment

How are we to understand Zulaykhā's supposed departure from the model of love that Jāmī outlines in the early sections of *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*, according to which love for a human beloved is supposed to lead one to loving God? This model aligns with the existing scholarship on the poem, despite the fact that most scholars have not analyzed these prologue chapters of the *maṯnavī*. Throughout this dissertation, I have endeavored to show that the theory that Jāmī adopts and adapts from Ibn ʿArabī and ʿIrāqī, which is supposed to underlie the model of moving from human love to divine love, contains within it an internal tension that accounts for Zulaykhā's seeming inability to transcend her love for Yūsuf's form to love (only) God directly. According to this theory, the world is nothing other than God's own self-manifestation. This self-manifestation occurs through the manifestation of God's names and attributes (*asmāʾ wa-ṣifāt*), while God's essence (*dhāt*) remains transcendent and utterly unknowable. However, these names and attributes are coterminous with God's essence, so worship and love directed at any locus of God's manifestation—i.e., any entity in the world—is nothing less than worship and love directed at God.

Though Jāmī, in his introductory sections of the *maṯnavī*, admonishes one to transcend the world of form and seek the meaning behind this form, both Zulaykhā's character arc and Jāmī's philosophical-Sufi writings seem to suggest that attachment to form is at least partially justified if one is aware of the form's meaning, i.e., its being a self-manifestation of God. Jāmī's approach to idolatry, discussed in chapter two of this dissertation, is instructive here. As Jāmī explains, following Ibn ʿArabī, even an idol is a legitimate object of worship insofar as it is a manifestation of God, and the *ʿārif* recognizes its status as such. As I have shown, Zulaykhā seems to be aware that her idol's worthiness as an object of worship comes from God. This

recognition is an echo of her recognition, from her very first dreams of Yūsuf, that his beauty originates from God.

Despite the fact that Zulaykhā's love of Yūsuf is ultimately justified by his status as a manifestation—indeed the supreme manifestation—of God's essence (which Jāmī himself describes as "Beauty" in the beginning of his *maṯnavī*), I acknowledge that her attachment to Yūsuf can nonetheless be understood as excessive, even transgressive. In this conclusion, I address this potential counterargument by suggesting that her excess and transgression are mitigated by her status as a lover who loses her personal identity in love and by her embodiment of bewilderment (*ḥayra*), a concept that is important in the thought of Ibn ʿArabī and ʿIrāqī.

Zulaykhā's transgression and excess arguably lie not in her choice of Yūsuf as an object of love but rather in her sole devotion to her beloved. This is already implied in the cosmological worldview that Jāmī expresses in the beginning of the *maṯnavī*: if God is manifest in the entire world, then everything in the world is worthy of love and adoration. This point is illustrated in Zargar's account of Ibn ʿArabī's three levels of love: "the divine (*al-hubb al-ilahi*), the spiritual (*al-hubb al ruhani*), and the natural (*al-hubb al-tabi'i*)."[256] Zargar explains that the three levels are distinguished by differing degrees of self-loss. The lowest level, natural love, is mundane physical, romantic, and/or sexual love that seeks only sensual satisfaction.[257] While sexual intercourse involves, to some degree, the dissolution of boundaries between lover and beloved, if the love does not advance beyond the level of the natural, this is the extent of the lover's

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[256] Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 77. I have not amended Zargar's transliteration of the Arabic terms.

[257] Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 79.

experience of self-loss. Spiritual love goes beyond this by involving a unification of desires and wills between lover and beloved. Zargar writes, "On the level of spirit, the merge is far more complete and the interchange more exact; this is so much the case that the wills or the desires of the two parties merge into one, such that the lover wills whatever his beloved wills and vice versa."[258] This form of love is hinted at in *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*. When Zulaykhā first confesses her love to Yūsuf and he rejects her, he argues that if she truly loved him, she would accept his wishes. Zulaykhā's love, I argue, goes beyond this—it reaches the level of divine love.

According to Zargar, divine love in Ibn ʿArabī's threefold scheme is the highest form of love and has two aspects. Its first aspect is that the boundaries between lover and beloved completely dissolve such that the two become one. Zargar explains that this love thus illustrates and confirms the Akbarian account of the world, according to which the world has no independent existence and is all merely a manifestation of God's existence. He writes,

> The human love that most resembles divine love (which Ibn 'Arabi often simply calls "divine love") demands an almost complete loss of self. While the barrier between a human lover and his beloved cannot be completely removed, the distinction between "self" and "other" can be reduced to almost nothing. On this level of love, the gnostic lover realizes the Oneness of Being. Things are inseparable, including the lover and the Beloved such that everything is beautiful and everything is beloved. If it were fair to posit a "divine perspective," the human version of divine love would most correspond to such a perspective, since the Real sees only himself in all created things, thus admiring the beauty of all things and loving them. One who loves with the human version of divine love adores all created things, for "the sign of divine love is a love for all created things on every realm [of existence], supersensory, sensory, imaginal, or subjective-imaginal."[259]

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[258] Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 79.

[259] Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 80, quoting at the end of the excerpt Ibn ʿArabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*. See Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 80n90.

According to Zargar, the self-loss that characterizes the human form of divine love leads to a love that is not solely focused on the singular object of love, but rather extends outward to encompass all of creation. When the boundaries of lover and beloved reach the point of dissolution, each one realizes that neither of them has an independent existence. They become one, sharing a common identity and a common being, thus experiencing the very Oneness of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) that characterizes the entire cosmos. If lover and beloved share in the Oneness of Being with the entire created world, then both, supposedly, come to recognize the entire world as worthy of love.

As I have already shown, Yūsuf and Zulaykhā's love can be characterized as "divine" according to the threefold scheme of Ibn ʿArabī. At the poem's conclusion, Yūsuf becomes Zulaykhā by tearing her garment and building a seven-chambered palace for her. In dying so that she might join Yūsuf in the hereafter, Zulaykhā likewise shows that her identity—and thus her fate—are inseparable from his. However, Zulaykhā never comes to love the whole world as much as she loves Yūsuf. Indeed, her act of gouging out her eyes is a rejection of the very notion that anything in the world, apart from Yūsuf, is worthy of being the object of her loving gaze. Has she fallen short of enacting divine love, despite her status as the best of lovers?

Indeed, one could also interpret Zulaykhā's exclusive attachment to Yūsuf as paralleling an excess or transgression involved in wrongful idol-worship, from the perspective of Ibn ʿArabī and his school. As stated previously, while idol-worship is justifiable if one is aware of God's manifestation in the forms of the world, idol-worship crosses the limits of acceptability when the worshiper fails to recognize God's manifestation in all forms, including forms other than a particular idol. Nair explains the school's position as follows: "To limit God to specific forms is to forget that He cannot be limited to some forms and excluded from others. This is the basic

problem of idol worship, which tends to restrict God to one privileged form while excluding Him from others."[260] Is Zulaykhā's attachment to Yūsuf, after all, simply idolatrous adoration, as the scholars discussed in the introduction to this dissertation have argued?

The fact that Jāmī never condemns Zulaykhā for her attachment, and indeed praises her for being the best of all lovers, should give us pause. Jāmī, as the author of the *maṯnavī*, does not seem to communicate, in the text itself, that Zulaykhā has erred in her love. I suggest that one way of explaining Zulaykhā's attachment to Yūsuf, and its worthiness, is through the lens of *ḥayra*, or bewilderment, a concept that has a positive valence within the discourses of Ibn ʿArabī's school. As Zargar explains, for Ibn ʿArabī, the witnessing of God in the forms of the world—which relates to God's *tashbīh*, or similitude to the world—creates bewilderment in the onlooker.[261] Zargar links Ibn ʿArabī's concept of *ḥayra* to both love and idolatry as understood by Ibn ʿArabī and his followers, writing,

> Perplexity in the language of Ibn 'Arabi is directly related to love, for while "reason ties down its possessor," love has the opposite effect: "Among the attributes of love [*al-hubb*] is waywardness [*al-dalal*] and perplexity [*al-hayrah*], although perplexity is incompatible with reason. Truly reason brings you together, while the better of the two [love] strews you apart!" These idol worshippers / gnostics have uncovered a reality of the human soul that, when known, strews them apart. To ask them to relinquish this painful, inebriating, yet enrapturing knowledge in favor of transcendence, which is a negative knowledge, or what might be called a willed ignorance, is futile. It is because of their status as immoderate and uncompromising lovers that the idol-worshipping "knowers" deserve both blame and praise. On the one hand, they have abandoned transcendence completely, which is blameworthy, but on the other hand, these polytheists represent the gnostics

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[260] Nair, *Interpreting Ibn ʿArabī*, 75.

[261] Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 28–29. As Zargar explains, throughout his writings, Ibn ʿArabī "describes al-hayrah, the eradication of which was the stated goal of classical Islamic philosophy and theology, in a positive manner," and he seems to consider it a higher form of knowledge beyond knowledge attained via rational proofs. Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 29n78.

> themselves, for the gnostics are in a sense inclined to the way of similitude, that is, the way of love and vision.[262]

Zargar explains that the lover finds themself in a contradictory position: "the vision of God in forms…contradicts reason itself," which dictates *tanzīh*, that God transcends the world and is incomparable to it.[263] However, *tashbīh* cannot be abandoned for the sake of *tanzīh*. As I have already discussed, for Jāmī, denying God's *tashbīh* (which is entailed by God's self-manifestation in the forms of the world) results in placing an undue restriction on God. Furthermore, as Jāmī's commentaries on Ibn ʿArabī, discussed above, show, God cannot be known outside of form because God's essence is unknowable.[264] This is a point of agreement between Ibn ʿArabī and the other main source for Jāmī's theoretical account of love in *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*: ʿIrāqī. For ʿIrāqī, God is not simply unknowable outside of form, but cannot be loved without the mediation of forms either. As Zargar puts it, "Since for 'Iraqi absolute love corresponds to the impenetrable divine essence, humans have no access to it and are thus forced to make use of intermediaries. 'Iraqi makes clear, much like Ibn 'Arabi, that creation's outer forms, indeed even material forms, act as these intermediaries, allowing for witnessing and the experience of love."[265]

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[262] Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 29, quoting from Ibn ʿArabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*. See Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 29n79.

[263] Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 138.

[264] "[F]or the gnostic, the beautiful is the Real. One important caveat must be mentioned: The gnostic cannot witness the Real outside of the boundaries of form." Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 5.

[265] Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 58. As above, I have not amended Zargar's romanization of Arabic names.

Zulaykhā thus finds herself in a bewildering position. Knowing that Yūsuf's overwhelming beauty results from God, she is nonetheless beholden to that beauty, having no access to God's unknowable essence. Her bewildering attachment to Yūsuf's form is not necessarily the result of ignorance of Yūsuf's status as a manifestation of God's beauty, but stems from the difficulty, if not impossibility, of cognitively and affectively reconciling God's similitude and transcendence. For both Ibn ʿArabī and ʿIrāqī, being simultaneously aware of God's *tashbīh* and *tanzīh* is being able to see with both eyes.[266] As Nair explains,

> [T]he two eyes symbolize the viewpoints of incomparability and similarity. They correspond to reason, which affirms God's absence from the world, and imagination, which declares Him present. The eye of imagination perceives the sameness of God and His creation, while the eye of reason discerns difference. To see with both eyes is to regard God as incomparable, transcendent, and absent, as well as similar, immanent, and present. The actual situation lies between the two, while each eye functioning by itself restricts and limits God (*taqyīd, taḥdīd*).…As Ibn ʿArabī frequently reminded his readers, seeing with both eyes led to "perplexity" (*ḥayra*). What one faculty understands only throws the other into perplexity. Since each is perplexed by what is addressed to the other, *perplexity is the actual situation*.[267]

Nair states that furthermore, "Throughout the Fuṣūṣ, Ibn ʿArabī reiterated that perplexity is the state of the Folk of Allāh, who perceive things (i.e., the states of the cosmos) as they truly are."[268]

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[266] As Nair explains, in Ibn ʿArabī's writings, "Only the 'Possessor of Two Eyes' (*dhū l-ʿaynayn*) reaches the goal" of reconciling reason, which dictates God's *tanzīh*, and imagination, which experiences God's *tashbīh*. Nair, *Interpreting Ibn ʿArabī*, 210. Zargar makes a similar point regarding ʿIrāqī, writing, "'Iraqi's emphasis on the vision of *tashbih*/similitude leads him to mock those who see exclusively through the eye of *tanzih*/transcendence, those blinded by their intellects who cannot see that Creator and creation are one. A term he uses to describe such perceptionally inept souls is *ahwal*, or "cross-eyed," since a cross-eyed person perceives a second figure where there is merely one object." Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 37.

[267] Nair, *Interpreting Ibn ʿArabī*, 210, emphasis added.

[268] Nair, *Interpreting Ibn ʿArabī*, 211.

I suggest that Zulaykhā, far from being unable to see God in Yūsuf, is simply overwhelmed by the beautiful vision that she sees, knowing from her first dream of him that the object of her loving gaze was from God. She sees with both eyes open, the eyes of *tashbīh* and *tanzīh*, which cause her to become bewildered because of their incompatibility. Even after she gouges out her physical eyes, Jāmī says that she still possesses the capacity for clearsighted vision. He writes,

3744. First, she removed her eye from all that was not her beloved, And after that, she threw the coin of her life upon his dirt	نخست از غیر جانان دیده بر کند وز آن پس نقد جان بر خاکش افکند
3745. May there be thousands of blessings on her soul and body; May the eyes of her soul, toward her beloved, be bright.	هزاران فیض بر جان و تنش باد به جانان دیدهٔ جان روشنش باد

One could read this to mean that Zulaykhā has closed the eyes of *tashbīh* and opened the eyes of *tanzīh*. However, I suggest instead the eyes of Zulaykhā's soul, like the earthly eyes that she has given up, are both open toward her beloved, Yūsuf. Both in life and in death, she possesses the ability to see with both eyes, the eyes of *tashbīh* and *tanzīh*, when she gazes upon her beloved, who is the most beautiful of God's self-manifestations.

One can also explain Zulaykhā's supposed departure from the theoretical framework that Jāmī adopts by acknowledging that the narrative has outstripped the theoretical frame underpinning it. This observation is in accord with recent studies on the *maṯnavī* that examine the genre as proto-novelistic and non-allegorical. For example, in a dissertation on Rūmī's *Maṯnavī*, Lipowitz argues for the form's dialogic and unfinalizable approach to truth, drawing upon concepts introduced by literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin's (d. 1975) essays on the novel

form.[269] From this perspective, the characters in a *maṯnavī* exhibit psychological complexity and internal variance that might cause them to exceed the expectations of the theoretical—i.e., philosophical or ethical—discourses that the author might be using them to illustrate. Cross takes a similar approach in his study of *Vīs u Rāmīn* by the fifth-/eleventh-century poet Gurgānī, in which Cross shows not only that characters' truth claims are often tested in dialogue with each other, but also that they often depart from the archetypes they are meant to embody, such as that of king or lover.[270] One might say that Jāmī remained more faithful to the love story at the heart of the poem instead of the theoretical framework he had perhaps sought to impose on it.

Zulaykhā's seeming departure from the model that Jāmī outlines is nonetheless instructive in its contrast with Bāzighih. While Zulaykhā, unlike Bāzighih, cannot let Yūsuf go, Bāzighih never feels the ecstatic, self-annihilating love that Zulayhkhā experiences, the "divine love" that Zargar posits as the highest form of love in Ibn ʿArabī's scheme. Zulaykhā's transgressiveness, if one can characterize her behavior as such, is perhaps the worthwhile cost for the experience of self-dissolving divine love. As Zargar suggests, heresy is perhaps permissible to lovers. He writes,

> [Another] act of heresy is the depicting of the Real in forms, for God is beyond forms and limitations. Yet the lover must see the Real in forms…in order to know the beloved and experience love. While these statements are beyond the intellectual boundaries of any rational argument (*burhan*), they are proven by the reality of the soul (which is

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[269] Cassie Lipowitz, "Polyphony and Divine Perplexity: Rūmī's Pedagogy of Storytelling in the *Mathnawī*" (PhD diss., Graduate Theological Union, 2022), 21–62.

[270] Cameron Cross, *Love at a Crux: The New Persian Romance in a Global Middle Ages* (University of Toronto Press, 2023), 5–8, 20–21, 105–146.

> inseparable from its Lord), its experiences, and the witnessing of the Real in forms (*taswirihi*), an envisioning beheld firsthand by the gnostic lover.[271]

Zulaykhā's attachment to Yūsuf is not the result of rational deduction, which is precisely the way in which Bāzighih abandons her love of Yūsuf in order to love God. Yūsuf convinces her that God is more worthy of her love than he is, as a mere human being, because God is the source of his beauty.[272] Zulaykhā will not allow reason to dissuade her from the truth of her feelings, and this allows her to experience the reality of the Unity of Being that Bazhighih never does.

In letting emotion, imagination, and vision guide her, Zulaykhā not only embodies *ḥayrah* but also provokes it in the reader. Her departure from the norm that Jāmī himself outlines gives one pause and, as I have shown, allows for deeper reflection upon the nuances of the Akbarian scheme of creation. Her seeming departure from the model of transcending human love to reach divine love points to a greater truth that cannot be revealed by the model itself: that human love is already divine.

In a recent article, Sami argues that Jāmī, even in his philosophical writing, transcended the ratiocentrism of other Muslim philosophers and theologians by integrating reason and imagination (which Nair explains, as noted above, correspond to the eyes of *tanzīh* and *tashbīh* in Akbarian thought) through what Sami calls "pictorial demonstration."[273] He proposes that for the purpose of "arriving at an understanding of a phenomenon inexhaustible by reason…Jāmī

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[271] Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 81.

[272] Jāmī, *YZ*, 102–103, lines 1729–1752.

[273] Muhammad Sami, "Human Understanding and God-talk in Jāmī and Beyond," *Open Theology* 11 (2025): 87, https://doi.org/10.1515/opth-2025-0044.

resorted to what may be referred to as pictorial demonstration: an act showing that something is true not by means of an argument, but by means of drawing a picture of reality through which particular intellectual difficulties, be them [*sic*] philosophical or theological, are overcome."[274] Perhaps Zulaykhā is herself a "pictorial representation," a literary creation that does not simply illustrate a philosophical position, but a "picture of reality" that shows the experiential consequences of recognizing her beloved as a manifestation of God and experiencing the self-dissolving love that reveals his and her equal participation in the Unity of Being. Jāmī's poetry, then, does not serve the purpose of illustrating a philosophical system but instead *does* philosophy. Zulaykhā's story demonstrates the internal tensions of the system Jāmī espouses and reveals a way of being in the world that goes beyond the limits of reason and prioritizes emotions, embodiment, and imagination in a way does not contradict the truth but honors it faithfully, to the very end.

والله أعلم

[274] Sami, "Human Understanding," 89.

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